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President: Mr. Deiss ..... (Switzerland)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 116 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade

Commemorative meeting on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held the debate on this agenda item at its 61st plenary meeting, on 9 December 2010, and adopted resolution 65/239, entitled "Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade", at its 73rd plenary meeting, on 23 December 2010.

Today, we remember the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. In its resolution adopted in November 2006 on the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, the General Assembly rightly states that "the slave trade and slavery are among the worst violations of human rights in the history of humanity" (*resolution 61/19, fourth preambular paragraph*).

Throughout history, slavery can be found in almost all cultures and continents. Evidence of slavery even predates written records. The transatlantic slave trade was uniquely horrendous due to its scale and its duration. This day of remembrance offers us an opportunity to acknowledge this dark chapter in the history of humanity and to pay tribute to the millions of victims who lost their lives and to all those courageous men and women who fought for the abolition of slavery.

Today's commemoration is an occasion for us to renew our commitment to education programmes. Public awareness of the causes, consequences, lessons and legacy of the 400-year-long slave trade is key to a better understanding of history and to educating future generations about the dangers of racism and prejudice and the universality of human rights.

Furthermore, it is an opportunity to highlight the fact that, regretfully, two centuries after the official abolition of slavery, contemporary forms of slavery-like practices persist and millions of human beings around the world are still treated as commodities in various ways. Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms".

Despite that commitment by Member States over 60 years ago, there are more than 10 million people around the world trapped in forced labour today. Forced labour takes different forms, including debt bondage, trafficking and other forms of modern slavery. The victims are the most vulnerable — women and girls forced into prostitution, migrants trapped in debt bondage, and sweatshop or farm workers kept there by illegal tactics and paid little or nothing.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Debt bondage, while the least known form of contemporary slavery, is nevertheless the most widely used method of enslaving people. Despite the fact that it is illegal in most countries where it is found, the laws are rarely enforced and those who profit from it are seldom brought to justice. Over 100 million children around the world are exposed to the worst forms of child labour, such as work in hazardous environments, slavery or other forms of forced labour, illicit activities, including drug trafficking and prostitution, and involvement in armed conflict.

Those numbers are shocking. Today, we must renew our joint commitment and live up to the aspirations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I repeat that no one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms. There can be no economic, cultural or historical excuse for slavery continuing in any form in the twenty-first century.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: The transatlantic slave trade caused untold suffering. We are here today to focus on the untold stories — the living legacy of 30 million untold stories; the stories of the Africans and their descendants who were treated as less than human; the memories brought with them through the terror of the middle passage; their culture and totems suppressed and given little or no room for expression; their beliefs, to which they turned for solace and sustenance during a harrowing ordeal; and their history and their very identity, systematically erased.

Through this International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, we commit to remember, recognize and restore. Over the past week, the United Nations has organized a series of events to mark the occasion. I thank those who have helped to make those efforts possible, including the Caribbean Community, the African Group, the Chair of the African Union and the Permanent Missions of Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon.

Just steps from this rostrum, in the Visitors' Lobby, there is a moving exhibition. In one of the display cases can be seen a slave ball, typical of the ones used to limit the movement of slaves. It weighs 50 pounds — not 10, 20 or even 30 pounds, which are all heavy enough. Try picking up 50 pounds, even once. Then imagine it as a constant presence. Then imagine the horrendous conditions and treatment that accompanied that weight. Then imagine the mindset of the slavers who built the system — callous, righteous and infected with greed and inhuman behaviour. Yet those overlords and slave masters were all too human. Therein lies our challenge, even today, to remember slavery then and to continue the fight against its contemporary versions now.

Together, we must carry that weight. While **legalized slavery has long been abolished, slavery-like practices are very much with us — from debt bondage** and domestic servitude to forced **or early marriages, the sale of wives and trafficking in children. That** is why we have to educate people about the trade, including through the United Nations Educational Outreach Programme and UNESCO efforts, such as the Slave Route Project and the General History of Africa.

By studying slavery, we give names and faces to people and places that had been made invisible. By examining the prevailing assumptions and beliefs that allowed the practice to flourish we raise awareness of the continued dangers of racism and hatred. And by honouring slavery's victims we restore some measure of dignity to those who had so mercilessly been stripped of it. That is the aim of this International Day and of this year's observance of the International Year for People of African Descent. It is at the heart of efforts to establish a permanent memorial here at the United Nations Headquarters complex.

This International Day forces us to confront human beings at their worst. However, in those who opposed slavery then and now, we also celebrate people at their best: the brave slaves who rose up despite mortal risk; the abolitionists who challenged the status quo; and the activists who fight intolerance and injustice today. Whether renowned or unsung, those heroes show that the pursuit of human dignity is the most powerful force of all.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

Before proceeding further, I would like to inform Member States of the format of today's commemorative meeting. Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 17 September 2010, the General Assembly approved the recommendation of the General Committee that the format for commemorative meetings would include statements by the President of

the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, the Chairs of the five regional groups and the representative of the host country.

If there is no objection, and without setting a precedent, I shall take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to include in today's meeting statements by the Chair of the Caribbean Community and by Ms. Ruth Simmons, President of Brown University, as well as some cultural presentations.

It was so decided.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Salomon Nguema Owono, Deputy Prime Minister of Equatorial Guinea, who will speak on behalf of the African States.

Mr. Nguema Owono (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the Group of African States.

Today, we commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. As we think of that dark chapter in the history of humankind, we cannot help but recall the horrific and dehumanizing nature of slavery and the slave trade, whereby African slaves were forcibly detained and transported as human cargo to the Americas.

This day holds great significance for the people of Africa, because our continent was ravaged by slavery and the slave trade. To this day, more than 500 years later, our continent still has not recovered from the devastation wrought by the slave trade. This International Day of Remembrance has become the most fitting annual event for us to pay homage to the African slaves who found themselves on the front lines of the fight to abolish slavery. All too often, history books have not recognized the leading role that enslaved Africans played in making the supreme sacrifice of fighting for freedom from slavery. Without their commitment to fighting for their freedom, slavery in the Americas would have persisted century after century. This is a tribute in memory of our heroes.

This commemoration is being held 10 years after the adoption of the Durban Declaration. Unfortunately, the international community has achieved few of the objectives established in the Declaration. We hope for a greater commitment to the principles of Durban. The theme of this year's commemoration, "The transatlantic slave trade: the living legacy of 30 million untold stories", tells the story of each African brought to the Americas. All of them had a life, a family and a community. Who they were and where they come from were ultimately lost once they made the transatlantic crossing.

I wish to congratulate the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), a significant part of the African diaspora, for their dedication and unswerving commitments to ensuring the establishment of this day of honour at the United Nations. The member States of the African Union are grateful for the ongoing partnership of CARICOM and the Member States and Secretary-General of the United Nations, in particular the Department of Public Information, for their support for this annual day of recognition and tribute to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

In the same vein, we wish to highlight the key importance of the Caribbean Community's initiative to erect a permanent memorial in a prominent place at United Nations Headquarters in recognition of the tragedy and the legacy of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. This undertaking to erect a memorial should be viewed as representing partial compliance with paragraph 101 of the Durban Declaration (A/CONF.189/12, chap. I), which, among other things, urged the international community to honour the memory of the victims of slavery. In effect, the memorial will be a tribute to the millions of African slaves who were forcibly taken from their families and countries of origin and brought to the Americas. It will become a reminder of the struggle against and triumph over slavery and more than four centuries of dehumanization of the African people. We urge States to continue to make contributions to the trust fund for the permanent memorial, which is administered by the United Nations Office for Partnerships.

We, the peoples of Africa, will never forget the slave ships and the systematic exploitation that they represented. We shall galvanize our continuing efforts to embrace all members of the broad African diaspora. In commemorating the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic S'ave Trade, we wish to pay special tribute to the people of Haiti, who were the first to topple the plantation system, which depended on African slave labour, and who established the first black republic, with an advanced Constitution that guaranteed all Africans their freedom. Haiti is an

example of strength and pride. Our Haitian brothers and sisters have suffered one disaster after another, but we believe that they will triumph with ease, as they have always done, in the face of the great adversity they have faced throughout their history.

Many benefited from the slave trade and slavery. Their gain was our loss. We invite those who benefited to search their conscience and make the necessary effort to help the peoples affected to recover the development lost to them. **May God bless the heroic and long-suffering people of Africa.**

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Latvia, who will speak on behalf of the Eastern European States.

Mr. Penke (Latvia): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States to pay our respects to the memory of those who were exploited and who died during those dark years of the barbaric and inhuman practice of slavery and the slave trade.

It is shameful that those practices are part of history and lasted for such a long time. Today's commemorative event gives us an opportunity to pay special tribute to those who risked and lost their lives in resistance to enslavement and in the campaign to abolish slavery.

On behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, I would like to thank the Caribbean Community, in particular Jamaica, for their leadership in presenting resolution 65/239, entitled "Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade", during the current session of the General Assembly. Erecting a permanent memorial in acknowledgement of the tragedy and in consideration of the legacy of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade will be an important contribution to the memory of the victims.

The purpose of our gathering here today is not only to acknowledge and remember, but also to make sure that we avoid similar tragedies in the future. Modern-day slavery might be less visible, but it exists and is contrary to the values of freedom and dignity for which the United Nations stands. We must put an end to that abominable crime through a concerted, comprehensive and collective effort, using international mechanisms such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing that Convention, and the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, recently adopted by the General Assembly.

We must find innovative ways to bridge the knowledge gap that still exists with regard to the consequences of the slave trade and slavery, and to continue educational outreach to fight discrimination, intolerance and prejudices.

The President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I invite participants to hear a performance by Ms. Tricia Keens-Douglas of Grenada.

The members of the General Assembly heard a musical performance.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Bahamas, who will speak on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States.

Ms. Booker (Bahamas): I have the distinct honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Member States of the Latin American and Caribbean Group on this fifth annual observance of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, under the theme "The transatlantic slave trade: the living legacy of 30 million untold stories".

With the Assembly's historic adoption of resolution 61/19, on 28 November 2006, we as a community of nations began the process of erecting a bridge that spans 400 years from the ports of Europe to the slave ports along the west coast of Africa and to those throughout the Americas, in particular Latin America and the Caribbean. We embarked on a remarkable journey, which has brought us here today in the hope that our fervent acknowledgement of slavery and the slave trade as crimes against humanity will reinvigorate our sensibilities and our passion, and to recommit ourselves to ensuring that no man, woman or child is subjected ever again to such horrific crimes, in accordance with article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as was underscored earlier by President Deiss.

We can all agree that, apart from race, one of the driving forces behind the horrific practice of slavery was capitalism and the demand for commodities. What a high price to pay for millions of enslaved African

men, women and children. In the words of the late nineteenth-century economist Henry Charles Carey:

> "The first of all commodities to be exchanged is labour, and the freedom of man consists only in the exercise of the right to determine for himself in what manner his labour shall be employed, and how he will dispose of its products."

Suffice it to say that the millions of slaves on whose backs the major economies of the world were enriched could not exercise the right to determine in what manner their labour would be employed.

No, we must not forget the cries and freedom songs of our brothers and sisters, which still echo in our minds and hearts today. We must, however, do more to correct the lingering social, political, cultural and economic injustices that still plague societies in Africa, the Americas and throughout the world some two hundred years after the abolition of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. To overcome these injustices, we must recommit ourselves to eliminating systemic imbalances in the current international economic environment through, inter alia, strengthened partnerships for development, enhanced international cooperation, including the fulfilment of internationally agreed official development assistance and increased capacity-building, and to creating a fair, just and equitable international economic order so that our societies, which have suffered for too long, can achieve sustainable growth and development.

The ongoing scourge of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance is a form of injustice that we have yet to overcome in spite of our efforts. The goals we set at the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance still elude us. The States members of the Latin American and Caribbean Group reiterate support for the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and for the convening of a one-day high-level plenary meeting during the sixty-sixth session of the Assembly, in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration and Programme of Action. A few days ago, on 21 March, we observed the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Yet we must be ever mindful of our collective responsibility to continue the fight to eliminate all forms of racism and to the promotion and protection of all human rights for all.

We also welcome the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 64/169, proclaiming 2011 as the International Year for People of African Descent, and we thank the delegation of Colombia for spearheading this important initiative. We cannot underscore sufficiently the need to ensure respect for diversity in heritage and culture, particularly for persons of African descent who continue to suffer indignity and all forms and manifestations of racism. We encourage Member States to undertake activities in support of the International Year for People of African Descent.

As a region that was the hub for millions of enslaved African men, women and children arriving on its shores, we in Latin America and the Caribbean share a rich, unique history and culture, of which we are proud. We applaud the States members of the Caribbean Community and the African Group for spearheading annually this special celebration. We also extend thanks to the Secretariat, in particular the Department of Public Information, for the support given to this commemorative meeting and to the activities held this past week.

In conclusion, as the current Chair of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, I take this opportunity to make special note of the historic project to erect, at a place of prominence here at the United Nations, a permanent memorial in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. This project is yet another step in the process of building a bridge and in acknowledging the tragedy and lingering consequences of the slave trade. With the recent launch on 1 February of the permanent memorial website, the Latin American and Caribbean Group commends the Permanent Memorial Committee and the United Nations Office for Partnerships for their ongoing efforts to honour the legacy of 30 million untold stories. Let us not continue to pay lip service when it comes to this abhorrent practice. Let us lend our support by contributing to this historic and important initiative. Let the story be told.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Iceland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Pálsson (Iceland): The transatlantic slave trade is a dark chapter in Western history. Although slavery existed in ancient times, the scale of this abhorrent practice was unprecedented. For 400 years,

millions of people were subjected to abuse and deprived of their freedom and dignity. Many did not survive the difficult journey across the ocean.

As we recall the injustice committed and the suffering of the victims, we can take encouragement from the fact that through a tough and strenuous battle, the transatlantic slave trade was eventually brought to an end. The invincible spirit of the victims themselves and others who decided that freedom for all was worth fighting for underlines the importance of our work in the United Nations. It gives hope that progress can be made and justice vindicated.

The United Nations, its agencies and, not least, its individual Member States, along with civil society, can work together in righting the many wrongs that still afflict our planet.

More than 60 years ago, we undertook, in the Assembly, to uphold human rights, as all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights further states that "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms." Nevertheless, millions of people worldwide continue to be treated as property, trafficked for exploitative purposes, including forced labour and sexual exploitation, slavery and practices similar to slavery.

Women and children are subject to forced sexual labour, violence and abuse, and many of them lose their lives to HIV/AIDS. Trafficking in forced labour takes place in many industries, including the textile industry, mining and agriculture. All of our countries are affected. Some have become major destinations for victims, while others lose many of their citizens to this hideous but lucrative practice. To redress the situation, increased international cooperation and enhanced implementation of existing laws and regulations is needed, along with a change in social norms and attitudes.

In that context, let me take this opportunity to reiterate the importance of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, both powerful tools in the combat against trafficking.

It is our responsibility to prevent history from repeating itself. Let us commemorate the memory of the victims of the transatlantic slave trade by vowing to strengthen our efforts to combat modern-day slavery in all its forms.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the host country.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): Today we recognize the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade by paying tribute to the millions who suffered under the lash and praising the countless efforts of others who fought to bring this odious practice to an end.

Our tribute is not confined to a single day or a set of speeches, however solemn, but continues daily in our efforts to chronicle and preserve the history of those who suffered, to celebrate the victories of those who fought not only the practice but its legacy and, by our active efforts, to bring an end to the modern equivalent of slavery in its despicable industry, human trafficking.

The United States remains committed to preserving the memory of slavery within our own country's history. We must never forget the full extent of the human suffering involved, and must remain vigilant in our readiness to fight any attempt to deprive others of their freedom for the benefit of a few.

In the United States, we celebrate National African American History Month every February. This year we focused on the brave African Americans who fought for their freedom in the Civil War. We continue to look for ways to connect American voices to the global conversation about the transatlantic slave trade.

We are also one of the primary funders of UNESCO's Transatlantic Slave Trade Education Project, launched by a network of schools in Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, North America and Africa, which seeks to increase awareness of the causes and consequences of the transatlantic slave trade.

The transatlantic slave trade is part of our country's history. The struggle for freedom is central to the African American experience in the United States. From resolute Revolutionary War soldiers fighting for liberty to the hard-working students of today reaching for horizons that their ancestors could only have imagined, African Americans have strengthened our

nation by leading reforms, overcoming obstacles and breaking down barriers. The United States has been enriched by African American leaders who, by word and example, have sought to cast off the burden of slavery and to keep our country true to its founding principles.

On 31 January, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton acknowledged the International Year for People of African Descent, an initiative that we supported both at the United Nations and at the Organization of American States as an opportunity for all of us around the globe to celebrate the diversity of our societies and to honour the contributions that our fellow citizens of African descent make every day to the economic, social and political fabrics of our communities.

As part of that effort, we are engaging with civil society and host Governments in the Western Hemisphere on a set of programmes aimed at highlighting the contributions made by people of African descent. We are working closely with the Governments of Brazil and Colombia on action plans to eliminate racial and ethnic discrimination and to promote equality in our respective countries. We are also partnering with Brazil in launching an anti-racism curriculum project at UNESCO.

Finally, as we commemorate the victims of slavery and remember the slave trade, we must note our ongoing efforts to combat human trafficking and other forms of modern slavery. Through the work of the United States President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, we are building a whole-of-Government approach that will raise public awareness about existing protections and improve the way that we protect trafficking victims and prosecute human trafficking cases within our borders.

The United States will continue to work in the United Nations and in other international forums to end modern slavery, to bring traffickers to justice and to empower survivors to reclaim their rightful freedom.

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Jamaica, who will speak on behalf of the Caribbean Community.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica): I have the distinct honour to address the Assembly on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). We are deeply honoured to once again participate in this solemn commemorative meeting of the General Assembly to remember and honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

CARICOM delegations wish to be associated with the statements made earlier by the Deputy Prime Minister of Equatorial Guinea, on behalf of the African Group, and by the representative of the Bahamas, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

This year we commemorate this event under the theme "The transatlantic slave trade: the living legacy of 30 million untold stories". The theme begs for poignant reflection on a vast reservoir of silenced voices of a people whose expressions were muted or suppressed over generations under a brutal system of trading in persons from Africa and of African descent.

There are those who say that slavery is an issue of the past and that we do not need to rehash a debate on the topic. We do not support that idea, indeed we reject it, since the legacies of that pernicious system linger on in many parts of the world today — a legacy of hatred, prejudice and racial discrimination. The proponents of such a viewpoint would wish to silence the debate on slavery, but we feel that the stories need to be told because the lessons from our past inform the present, and will most certainly influence the future. On that basis, we seek to counter the legacy of slavery by inculcating new values and attitudes in the children and young people of today's generation and for future generations to come.

As we commemorate this solemn remembrance of slavery, we take time to remember the struggles of our ancestors and the freedom that they secured, quite often through blood, sweat and tears. We recognize that it is a freedom that comes with responsibility, that is never to be taken lightly and that is to be protected at all costs.

All CARICOM countries are former slave societies, which today are proud democracies, built on a culture of freedom and born out of the struggle for emancipation, liberation and self-determination. The countries of the CARICOM subregion were colonized by almost every former colonial Power involved in the slave trade. We share a common history of the hardship suffered under slavery and of triumph over the architects of that system. We are proud of the history of the Caribbean and cherish it dearly. We represent the region that spawned the first country to shed the

vestiges of the system of slavery. Here, I refer to Haiti. It is well known that the first society to abolish the enslavement of African peoples emerged from a revolution in Haiti. That was a turning point in world history.

It took some 100 years after the Haitian revolution, but successive CARICOM member States eventually fought for and secured the emancipation of our peoples from the terrible system of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Having escaped the brutal system of slavery, we attach great importance to our struggle for nationhood and the subsequent acquisition of emancipation and independence. That, in turn, granted our respective countries the sovereignty and sovereign rights that enable us to effectively participate in the United Nations on an equal footing with all other Member States of the international community.

As we celebrate the 2011 International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, we pay tribute to our African ancestors. We remember the millions whose lives were lost in bondage on the journey through the middle passage and those who suffered and died under the brutal system of slavery in Europe and the Americas, including our own subregion of the Caribbean. We pay tribute to their strength of character and their resilience. We celebrate the things they have left behind — their customs, their food, their music and their religious beliefs.

More important, we encourage their muted voices to be released as we insist that the 30 million untold stories be heard. The once silenced voices, when truly liberated, will serve to inform, educate, raise awareness and stir consciences wherever possible. Against this background, we salute those who have engaged in research, education and advocacy on the issue of slavery, many of whom addressed the General Assembly during the course of this week in the various activities organized in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Public Information.

As we all know, the International Day of Remembrance is but one facet of our collective commitment to addressing the issue of slavery at the multilateral level. The decision to erect a Permanent Memorial at United Nations Headquarters, in keeping with the mandate of the 2001 Durban Declaration and in tandem with today's remembrance, is another facet, and together they represent two sides of the same coin. May I also take this opportunity to thank all those delegations that spoke and at least made reference to the Permanent Memorial initiative.

I am delighted to report that with the assistance and support of States members of the African Group and other partners, our efforts to implement this tangible outcome has made real progress to date. During the course of this year, we have made advances in negotiations with UNESCO for the international design competition, held an inaugural consultative meeting of donors, launched a website to raise international awareness, and secured more than $900,000, which is being held in the Trust Fund established to implement the initiative. Here, on behalf of the CARICOM member States, I would pay tribute to all donor countries that have seen fit to make a contribution to this worthy cause.

I encourage my colleagues to visit the website at www.unslaverymemorial.org. It is a work in progress that we plan to update in due course.

Mr. Diallo (Senegal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

On behalf of the States members of CARICOM, I also wish to express appreciation for the kind generosity of those countries that have already made donations to the Permanent Memorial Trust Fund. We are thankful for the show of solidarity in acknowledging the legacy of this dark period of history. We envisage that other countries will follow in their footsteps in making contributions to the Permanent Memorial Trust Fund to enable us to reach our target of $4.5 million for implementation.

In closing, I would like to reiterate the sentiments expressed by the representative of the Bahamas on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. Let the living legacies of the 30 million untold stories be heard and let them be told through the erection of a Permanent Memorial at United Nations Headquarters to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now have the honour of giving the floor to Ms. Ruth Simmons, President of Brown University.

Ms. Simmons: I wish to thank the States members of the Caribbean Community and the Group of African States for their invitation to speak to the

Assembly today in solemn remembrance of the victims of the transatlantic slave trade.

This International Day of Remembrance is an important international breakthrough in a long effort to recognize the seriousness and consequences of a monumental violation of human rights. The work that the Assembly has undertaken to recognize victims of the slave trade augurs well for future efforts to acknowledge the magnitude of this immense tragedy. I thank the Assembly for recognizing that nations cannot fully embrace the principles of fairness, equality and shared governance without acknowledging the occurrence of heinous acts that have violated these principles. Such a failure vitiates the most worthy current intentions. A full account of the slave trade, accompanied by an open acknowledgement of the ways in which nations' wealth rests upon this trade, is essential in the all-important struggle for openness, equality, mutual respect and peace among nations.

The work of UNESCO and the leadership of the United Nations in identifying those elements of human history that are important to how a culture interacts with other cultures are invaluable. Most recently, the incoming Director-General of UNESCO spoke in her inaugural address about a new humanism — one that evokes the fundamental rights of a people to their language, their history and their culture. This, as a general principle of international law and diplomacy, reveals in powerful ways the damage done by the transatlantic slave trade, in which, in the interest of commerce, nations permitted the systematic destruction of the connection of human beings not only to their lands and their families but also to their histories, their languages, their religious practices and their souls.

This wilful erasure has had far-reaching consequences down through the ages. Cast once more at sea, inheritors of this erasure have been left to a patchwork existence with gaping holes that cannot for the most part ever be filled with pieces that precisely match. Other peoples around the world have known such loss and have struggled with similarly deliberate oppressive acts, but nowhere has the erasure been more extensive or more complete than in the transatlantic trade.

What is one to do in the face of such a massive violation of human rights? Courageous individuals throughout the world must produce the arguments, challenge the practices that keep evil in place and ultimately overturn such wrongs. While acknowledging how difficult it can be to resist an evil act that has taken deep and self-interested root, I believe that resisting human rights violations must be an important, if not dominant feature, of worldwide efforts for peace and security.

The self-interest that inspires widespread evil deeds is powerful indeed. It overwhelms common sense and common decency, trounces good will towards others and installs itself with virulence. Even more problematic is the fact that, as virulent as such acts may have become, once they are eradicated the world forgets all too easily how they come into being and gain traction. This cycle of forgetting must finally be broken.

Our task in these times is to ensure that the world does not forget how easily massive human rights violations take root and gain acceptance in the heart of a society. International vigilance is required to identify and address the rise of such offences. International focus, diplomatic efforts and timely action to arrest the growth of such violations are essential.

Universities are vital partners in this process. Our task in serving society is not only to record history accurately but also to make sure that the history of such transgressions is not erased. I said that it is all too easy for such offences to settle upon the consciousness of a society. Sadly, it is just as easy for history to be erased or written in such a way as to make light of offences or, in some cases, to deny that they ever occurred. Deniers of atrocities are a breed apart. Inheritors of the malevolence of the original sin, they perpetuate the injustice done to victims by denying that it ever occurred in the first place.

We must face the deniers and, putting evidence before them, counter their fabrications with the stark truth. This universities do steadfastly. But universities must also reveal the truth of their own histories, practices and erasures. Many of our oldest universities in the United States have a special burden vis-à-vis the history of slavery. Our campuses were often founded with the largesse of those directly involved in the slave trade, and, in some cases, founders, faculty and even students kept slaves. This secret has long lingered in the shadows of the academy — an academy that today extols the principles of freedom and equality.

My university — Brown University — took steps to recover this history as a way of demonstrating that

the fear of the truth has no place in a university that purports to expose the truth. In 2003, a committee of faculty and students undertook a process to uncover any ties that our university had to the slave trade.

In commissioning a study of our university's history, I said that it was an effort to involve the campus community in a discovery of the meaning of our past. Understanding our history and suggesting how the full truth of that history could be incorporated into our common traditions would not be easy, but then, it did not have to be.

Our three-year-long process resulted in an extraordinary expedition through archives and artefacts of the New England slave trade. We learned that, although that history was largely absent from the university's official documents, some of our founders were in fact involved directly or indirectly in the transatlantic slave trade. We also learned that our state of Rhode Island was "steeped in the guilt and infamy of the African slave trade". Our process explored the meaning and implication of the benefit the university received from this commerce. We asked, I think, important questions: what did this history teach us about what we do today, and what does it compel us to do in these times? We concluded that we should memorialize this history so that it is forever after a visible dimension of our early history and current identity.

We are doing that by rewriting our history with the full account of what transpired in those early days. We are also committed to helping others understand the past and present consequences of human trafficking in all its dimensions; a centre is being established on our campus for this purpose. In addition, a memorial is being commissioned on our campus that acknowledges this history.

Finally, we decided that we should do more for the children of our city, particularly those who might be heirs to this history. In that regard, we established a fund to support local schools and a programme to train teachers who are employed in the public schools. These small steps are by no means intended to make amends for this history. Instead, they are meant to be ever-present lessons in how the principles of equality and justice can be so easily tarnished. They are to be constant reminders of our obligations to be "drum majors for justice", as Martin Luther King, Jr., intended.

Egregious wrongs compel action. The most important action is that which addresses the offence, cleanses the record and brings to light the truth of what has transpired. Most of all, any action that heals must cast light on the lasting effects of human rights violations. The action taken today is part of an important process to acknowledge that too little attention has been paid to the tragic commerce and consequence of the trade in African slaves. It is my hope that this worldwide process will lead to a greater understanding of those lasting consequences and prompt the world to consider ways in which to prevent modern-day abuses of human rights. We at Brown University are proud to have launched our process, inspiring other universities to follow; and we are proud today to be partners in the effort to set the record straight and to honour the sacrifice of so many millions who perished in the transatlantic trade.

Again, I thank the Assembly for the work that it has undertaken to acknowledge this history, and I am honoured to stand here today in solemn remembrance of those who perished in the transatlantic slave trade. I speak, too, in honour of my own forebears, who, in spite of inhuman conditions, survived and made a life in an alien land. It is to all of them that we owe remembrance this day.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Simmons for her statement.

I wish to inform the Assembly that the Cameroon Cultural Group is here with us today. I invite you all to enjoy their presentation.

The members of the General Assembly watched a dance performance.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of all participants, I would like to thank the Cameroon Cultural Group most sincerely for its fine performance.

Her Excellency Ms. Ama Tutu Muna, Minister of Culture of Cameroon, will now present a gift to the United Nations. Deputy Secretary-General Migiro has the honour and pleasure of accepting this gift on behalf of the Organization.

Ms. Muna (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on the way in which he is conducting this commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave

trade. As at the previous commemoration, Cameroon feels honoured to participate in this event.

On this occasion, I would also like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his efforts and commitment to the success of the events that, throughout this week, have sought to commemorate the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

Under this year's theme "The living legacy of 30 million untold stories", we have had occasion to think about and reflect on relevant topics, including, for example, the right to the truth and education about the horrors to which victims of slavery were subjected for decades. The theme has certainly helped to guide our thoughts on the reasons for, the consequences of and the lessons learned from that painful past and to raise the world's awareness of the dangers of slavery and associated phenomena, such as the trafficking in persons, which is modern-day slavery, racism and prejudices of all kinds.

For its part, Cameroon was honoured to participate in this week of activities devoted to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. As part of the festivities marking the celebration of this event, Cameroon, for its part, is honoured to present a token to the United Nations. Therefore, at the instruction of His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, I have the honour to offer this drum, which Cameroon presents to the United Nations on this solemn day.

The drum has the following characteristics. In terms of materials, it is sculpted from a precious wood from Cameroon known as padou or camwood, a redwood typical of tropical forests. The roping is made of rattan, a woody vine found in the forests of Cameroon; it is used to stretch and hold in place the skin covering the striking surface of the drum. The skin was taken from the back of a zebu, as it is quite elastic and solid and produces an excellent tone. The drum is 1.5 metres high, 55 centimetres in diameter and weighs a total of 71 kilograms.

The outside of the drum is decorated with three central panels that should be read from right to left. The first panel depicts the sale of slaves, together with the main parties involved in the transaction. The second recounts the transportation of slaves and their trials and tribulations. Finally, the third panel illustrates the lot of slaves, mainly through depictions of labour, abuse and punishment, revolt and freedom, and the return to their roots.

The body of the drum is supported by three sturdy carriers in broken chains, which symbolize freedom. The number of carriers corresponds to the life-cycle triptych of birth, life and death; the high, medium and low tones of the drum; and the three phonetic pronunciations of the vowel "e" spoken by the peoples of the forest, which, when sung together, make up the original jazz chorus. Ultimately, we find ourselves in the singularity and universality of the number "three". Thus, in a few words, I have described this drum, which is laden with symbols.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the United Nations, I would like to thank the authorities of Cameroon for having so kindly enriched the beautiful collection of artistic and cultural works of our common house. I would also like to thank Ms. Muna for her important statement.

The General Assembly has thus concluded its commemorative meeting on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to conclude its consideration of agenda item 116?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.

United Nations A/65/PV.82

General Assembly

Sixty-fifth session

Official Records

82nd plenary meeting
Monday, 28 March 2011, 10.15 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Deiss ..... (Switzerland)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Address by Mr. Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Republic of Italy

The President (*spoke in French*): Today, the Assembly will hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Republic of Italy.

Mr. Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Republic of Italy, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Republic of Italy.

On behalf of all States members of the General Assembly, I welcome President Napolitano. We are very honoured to welcome him here today. It is a great privilege to hear the message of a man who is deeply committed to his Republic and who, throughout his political career, has been in turn a militant, a parliamentarian and a minister, and is today the President of his country. His reputation as an author, professor and speaker is well known.

He is the President of a country, Italy, that marked its 150th anniversary of existence on 17 March. Of course, we are all familiar with the incomparable genius and immense influence of his country and people throughout the world. We know that their greatness and inestimable contributions to Western civilization are considerably older than their unity. These contributions range from Roman law to urbanism and architecture; from the culinary arts to literature and the fine arts; from football to cinema; from *bel canto* to fashion and design — the list goes on and on.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the unification movement in Italy responded to the aspirations of President Napolitano's forefathers to independence, freedom and justice. Today, in the early twenty-first century, uprisings in the Arab world bear witness to the universal and timeless value of those aspirations. In the face of these events, the international community must act responsibly, united and in solidarity.

I am pleased to underscore the fact that the Italian Constitution grants an extremely important role to international organizations in ensuring peace and justice among nations. Its article 11 "promotes and encourages international organizations furthering such ends". The United Nations was created to promote peace, security and prosperity throughout the world, and it is the pre-eminent forum where the solidarity of the international community must be expressed and solutions forged. The United Nations is the pre-eminent forum for global governance.

I thank Italy for its commitment to the United Nations and for its financial, human and technical contribution to defending and promoting the fundamental values of our Organization. It plays an essential role in United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. If the United Nations is to

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continue to be a central forum for global governance, it must be a strong and enduring instrument. To that end, it must resolutely carry through the reforms under way, in particular Security Council reform. In that connection, I welcome Italy's great commitment to the intergovernmental negotiation process.

As the central forum for global governance, the United Nations also has close contacts with two other major stakeholders in the sphere of governance: the Group of Eight and the Group of 20 (G-20). Italy, as a member of those Groups, has a key role to play. It can be proud of its long-standing efforts on behalf of global governance and of its active participation in the construction of Europe. Rome has given its name to more than one European treaty and is the host of several important international organizations.

I have done my best to build bridges between the General Assembly and the G-20 in order to draw that Group closer to the United Nations. Bridges are built to be crossed. With the presence of President Napolitano here among us today, he has taken that initiative. I am pleased and thank him for it.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: It is my great honour to join President of the General Assembly Joseph Deiss in welcoming President Napolitano here today, and it is a personal pleasure for me to introduce him.

This cannot be said of many people, but President Napolitano is a legend in his own time. Looking over some notes put together by my staff this morning, I noticed a quote from a newspaper citing him as "the grand old man of the Italian Republic". That is high praise indeed and has little to do with chronological age. Another called him "the embodiment of Italian post-war history". And it is true.

For many decades, he has been a leading moral voice of his country, and far beyond. He has been a champion of public principle, good governance, openness, transparency and honesty as democracy's highest goods. He has written more books than many people have read, and through his tireless, consistent and eloquent advocacy, he has helped make Italy all that it is today.

President Napolitano has come to address our Assembly at an important time in the history of the United Nations — a time that, in its way, is no less critical and no less transformative than that epochal year of 1989 he has written about so often. Now, as then, we are witness to revolution. Revolutionary change is sweeping the Arab world, with repercussions that will be felt everywhere and by all. We face no less epochal change in other spheres, from climate change and fighting global poverty to advancing human rights.

Italy is in the vanguard of all these struggles, just as President Napolitano himself has so often been in the vanguard of so many of humankind's great and noble causes. As the sixth-largest contributor to the United Nations budget, Italy is supporting the United Nations three pillars: peace and security, development and human rights. Italy has been a great contributor to United Nations peacekeeping. Most recently, Italy has supported the international campaign in Libya pursuant to Security Council resolution 1973 (2011). On the economic front, as a member of the Group of Eight (G-8) and the Group of 20, Italy has advanced the global agenda to meet the Millennium Development Goals. This was evident in 2009 when Italy hosted the G-8 in L'Aquila following the earthquake there, and Italy's strong commitment has been consistent throughout.

Italy's contribution goes beyond resources and manpower. Italy provides a crucial service to United Nations operations through both logistical training and support. The United Nations Logistics Base in Brindisi is gaining in importance as the United Nations system relies more and more on global and regional hubs to operate more quickly and effectively. As our new global field support strategy progresses, the Brindisi Base will become even more important.

The United Nations Staff College in Torino plays a critical role in helping the United Nations to build a professional and modern workforce to serve the international community. Rome is host to many important United Nations agencies fighting hunger and addressing other global challenges, from criminal justice to rural development. The international community chose Italy's capital as the birthplace of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which has emerged as central to our global fight against impunity.

In addition to Italy's many contributions to the United Nations, President Napolitano has personally supported many of our causes. His Excellency's dedication to parliamentary democracy is especially

noteworthy. He has shown great passion for international and European policy issues as President of the Republic and as a member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies. And he has extended the reach of his influence well beyond Italy's borders through his service as a representative to the North Atlantic Assembly and the European Parliament. I applaud him and the great country he has served over the remarkable span of his distinguished career.

Let me conclude by calling all of our attention to the golden sphere in the plaza outside the visitor's entrance to this Assembly. "Sphere within a Sphere", they call it. Italy donated this fine work of art, symbolizing the emergence of a more harmonious new world from the chaos of the old. What could be more appropriate? After all, is that not our United Nations mission? I thank President Napolitano for his leadership. I encourage his even greater engagement in the international arena as we look to our common challenges ahead. And now, like the rest of us, I look forward to hearing his address here at this important hour.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Republic of Italy.

President Napolitano: Let me express my deepest gratitude for the kind and generous words just addressed to me and my country by President Deiss and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

It is for me a great honour to address the General Assembly at an extremely challenging time for all of us. We are witnessing significant threats to international peace and security, hotbeds of political instability, economic and financial turmoil and unprecedented natural disasters. The winds of freedom, human dignity and social justice are blowing strongly across the world. We need to uphold human rights as a foundation of political stability and sustainable growth. We need to strengthen international legitimacy and the rule of law. We need to renew our commitment to a multilateral system of international relations. We need the United Nations.

Italy's history, geography and culture are rooted in the Mediterranean. Europe's fortunes rise and fall with the Mediterranean. We Italians, Europeans, see ourselves as part of the Mediterranean. Seas and oceans unite peoples and destinies. Our future lies in a shared partnership with our friends in North Africa, in the Middle East and in the Gulf.

In recent weeks and months, a wave of turmoil and discontent has shaken many countries in the region. People have taken to the street. I will not hide our concern at this turn of events. Nobody likes instability at his doorstep. Yet in some cases the stability was more fragile and precarious than it looked, and we should have been more conscious of the possible consequences of authoritarian forms of Government and of corruption in the ruling elite circles. Instead, the path towards political compromise, dialogue with civil society and democratic participation that many Governments have bravely undertaken will result in strengthened State institutions and rule of law. Democracy will advance, rising from the inside, not imported from the outside. Firm and reliable foundations for economic growth and shared prosperity will be established.

Our Mediterranean partners and friends own their future, but they must know that they are not alone, isolated or forgotten. Italy and Europe stand ready to join forces with them and to support their efforts of political, social and economic renewal. In early March, with the Joint Communication of the European Commission on a partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the southern Mediterranean, the European Union (EU) put forward a more focused, innovative and far-reaching strategy, to respond to the changing landscape in the Mediterranean. The Communication says in part:

> "Political and economic reform must go hand-in-hand and help deliver political rights and freedom, accountability and participation. The EU should be ready to offer greater support to those countries ready to work on such a common agenda, but also reconsider support when countries depart from this track."

This is what long-lasting stabilization is about. Its foundations are to be sought in freedom, thriving civil society, respect of human rights, democratic progress, national reconciliation and good governance.

Unfortunately, none of these was anywhere to be seen in Libya. The Libyan Government rejected countless international calls, including a unanimous appeal from this body, and responded to dissent with

repression, to civilian protest with military force on an unprecedented scale. The world could not remain idle while large casualties and massive destruction were inflicted on its own population by the Libyan leader. The responsibility to protect falls on United Nations, while Chapter VII of the Charter explicitly mandates the use of force to maintain international peace and security.

In Libya, we are now in the process of protecting the civilian **population and enforcing the United** Nations Charter, **acting under the full international legitimacy of Security Council resolution** 1973 (2011) of 17 March. In no way do we underestimate the human costs and risks of military actions. In international missions abroad, Italy has paid a high price in human lives and sufferings.

However, as I stated in Geneva addressing the Human Rights Council on 4 March, international legal protection of human rights lies at the heart and core of the United Nations system, as evidenced by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. It is more and more relevant to all Member States without exception. Human rights have progressively become a cornerstone of international relations. As a consequence, massive infringements of human rights make a regime illegitimate and place it out of the community of States.

This is a key concept that is constantly gaining ground, as shown by the adoption of resolution 1973 (2011). It does not mean exporting a specific model of democracy; it means promoting and protecting fundamental civil, political and religious freedoms as a precondition for the autonomous building, bottom-up, State by State, of any democratic system.

In any case, Libya belongs to a region that is undergoing profound change originating in the common principles of justice and progress, tolerance and the dignity of all human beings, as President Obama highlighted in his Cairo speech in June 2009. These are values we all share. Having been recently reaffirmed by the Arab League, they have become a beacon for the transformation under way in the Mediterranean.

On 17 March, we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Unification of Italy. We are an ancient nation but a young State that became a Republic at the same time the United Nations were born. "Twice in our lifetime [the scourge of war] has brought untold sorrow to mankind", reads the Preamble of the Charter. In those same years, Italy embraced democracy at home and the international multilateral order in the world as two sides of the same coin. We enthusiastically adopted multilateralism. The two cornerstones of Italy's position in the sphere of international relations have been and are our participation in the birth and growth of the European Community and our adhesion to the Atlantic Alliance. **The United Nations embodies the same choice on a global scale. Respect for the rights and dignity of the human person, and the equal status of all nations large** and small make it a truly universal Organization.

At the time of the founding of the United Nations, Italy adopted its Constitution, which in its article 11

> "rejects war as an instrument of aggression against the freedom of other peoples and as a means for the settlement of international disputes... agrees, on conditions of equality with other States, to the limitations of sovereignty that may be necessary to a world order ensuring peace and justice among the nations... [and] promotes and encourages international organizations furthering such ends."

These ideals, embedded in the founding principles of the Republic, have inspired the international action of my country during the more than 60 years of life of the United Nations, and particularly our active contribution to building European supranational institutions.

In the millennium we have barely entered, the United Nations is confronted by old and new challenges. While international peace and security, human rights and sustainable development remain paramount, other conflicting issues have come to the fore. For the first time in history, economic progress, fostered by international cooperation, has succeeded in defeating absolute poverty and deprivation for a significant portion of humankind. Unfortunately, since 2008, a severe financial crisis has exposed the dramatic imbalances of the international economy and finance and, following the near collapse of the banking system and the sheer necessity of a bail-out, has led to an unprecedented accumulation of sovereign debt in many countries.

Finance and financial vehicles are moving fast — too fast for States to react in adequate time. This is not

a failure of globalization per se; it is a failure of international economic governance. For millions, such as farmers in remote regions earning a decent life thanks to better techniques of production or more adequate selling through mobile phones or the Internet, globalization has been a powerful engine of growth and well-being. But, of course, problems too have globalized, to the extent where sovereign nations are no longer able to provide a national framework to solve them. The globalization of problems demands the globalization of solutions.

In the economic realm, this is a world deeply transformed from that of the Bretton Woods institutions. The gold system has gone and, with the revolution in information technology, a click on the computer can move unlimited quantities of money, even virtual, as a bet on future outcomes. The paper economy sometimes gives the impression of subjugating the real one, much as production and work seem to be overtaken by financial speculation. While financial vehicles have certainly helped credit, they have also generated an unabashed confidence in the sustainability of family overspending, which was one of the causes of the 2008 international crisis. Its main cause probably lay in the weakening of old regulatory authorities and in the delay, if not reluctance to shape new rules and consequent institutions. It is in this direction that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has been tirelessly calling the United Nations to advance its agenda.

World stability is also at risk from natural disasters, profound changes and political upheaval. Since 2004, an unprecedented chain of tsunamis, earthquakes, floods, droughts and fires has brought extreme pain and sorrow, claiming hundreds of thousands of human lives. Let me take this opportunity to reiterate my solidarity with the Japanese people for the suffering inflicted on them by the most devastating tsunami, and my admiration for their resilience. It is time for the world community to reciprocate the generosity that Japan has never failed to extend in similar hardships.

Political upheavals can be explained by the bright side of globalization, which has made everyone feel like a citizen of a wider world. Time is running out for regimes that hide the truth, restrict the movement of peoples, and resort to lies, bribery and biased narratives of the outside world. Time is running out for cosmetic, limited reforms. What is at stake is the relationship between the citizen and the State — the so-called social contract. The world has a clear responsibility not only to help this new dawn to become a reality, but also to intervene whenever dictatorship, violence and obscurity try to stem the tide. The international community has to heed the call for freedom, justice and fair opportunities coming from societies hitherto kept under the lid of violence and oppression.

There is no tradeoff between stability and democratic freedoms. On the contrary, they reinforce each other. No nation can go it alone. Such challenges must be met on the basis of international legitimacy. The governance of a complex and interconnected world can and should be developed in various ways, through new or reformed bodies, in order to achieve maximum effectiveness and efficiency.

Still, the political and legal basis lies with the United Nations. I am aware of the on-going debate on the need for greater cooperation between the United Nations and the new forms of international governance that this General Assembly has initiated in such a constructive spirit. In this regard, I wish to pay tribute to President Deiss for his determination in promoting this dialogue.

The issue of global governance goes to the heart of the United Nations. It also requires the United Nations to cope with significant change and diversification. New global actors have emerged on the international scene; others will follow in their footsteps. The legitimacy of the Organization is embedded in the universal principle of equality among its Members, of which this Assembly is the greatest expression.

The Charter is the result of a spirit of give and take, of tolerance and of openness and respect for the views and interests of others in the spirit of dialogue, compromise and search for consensus best expressed by Mahatma Gandhi, who said: "But all my life through, the very insistence on truth has taught me to appreciate the beauty of compromise".

In order to strengthen the maintenance of international peace and security, any reform of the Security Council should enable the Council to be more representative, efficient and accountable to the Member States. We need consensus on that issue, more than on any other provision of the Charter. We all share the goal of international governance, peace and

security. The entire membership must be able to claim ownership of Security Council reform.

Europe is in the front line of today's challenges. Last week, the European Union Heads of Government took significant steps towards streamlining and strengthening fiscal and monetary discipline in the Eurozone. They reaffirmed their commitment to building a partnership of security and development in the Mediterranean.

Since the beginning of the integration process, Europe has lived in peace, for more than 60 years, for the first time in history. It has expanded from the original six to 27 countries. It cooperates with the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. It has a single currency. It has created a common space in which to trade and circulate freely.

Now, we need more Europe. With the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union moved forward on the path of institutional strengthening and parliamentary accountability. Current circumstances dictate more integration, including the further pooling of sovereignty, especially in the fiscal and monetary domain. For us Europeans, this is a must; there can be no turning back from the common currency that 17 member States freely choose to share.

The good health of the euro is vital to the world economy. As stated recently by the European Council, we are ready and willing to take all the necessary measures to that effect. The strengthening of the single currency requires more integration; in turn, it will be the driving force for further progress towards a single European voice in world affairs, including in foreign and security policy.

Europe's choices were rooted in history, triggered by tragic mistakes, and backed by the steady support of the United States of America and by the security provided by the Atlantic Alliance. In the universality of the United Nations, the European pattern does not claim to be a one-size-fits-all model. Yet, by succeeding beyond any realistic expectation, the European Union epitomizes the benefits and added value of multilateralism and international cooperation. Let me take pride in our journey from ashes and rubble to a healthy union of peoples and Governments. What we have achieved in Europe in peace, stability, prosperity and justice is what the Charter of United Nations stands for throughout the world.

Italy has been unstinting in its support for the United Nations, which is the most legitimate forum for promoting the fundamental values of humankind. A robust and credible United Nations serves the best interests of the international community. The sixth-largest contributor to the regular budget and to peacekeeping operations, Italy also contributes more Blue Helmets than any other European country. Not only do we financially support the United Nations missions, but we also provide human resources, equipment and the know-how to effectively implement the Security Council's mandates.

In a post-conflict environment, nations, peoples, women and children identify their hopes for a better future in the flag of the United Nations. Their expectations must be met. Eight thousand Italian women and men in uniform at the service of United Nations or United Nations-authorized peace operations; the Brindisi Logistics Base; the recent cooperation agreements between the Carabinieri Corps and the Organization for the training of Blue Helmets — these are Italy's contribution to allowing the United Nations to fulfil its mission. Our long, distinguished and challenging history of participation in United Nations missions includes the highest sacrifice bravely paid by Italians in blue helmets.

Let me now touch on issues that are especially dear to our heart. First, our opposition to the death penalty arises from our long-established conviction in the right to life. In the 1700s, the Italian philosopher Cesare Beccaria asked a simple question: "Did anyone ever give to others the right to take his life?" The historic 2007 General Assembly resolution 62/149 on a moratorium on executions was given a boost by increased voting majorities in 2008 and 2009. Italy is confident in the momentum created by civil society and in the growing support of the membership for abolishing capital punishment.

Secondly, we want to bring to the attention of the world community the dramatic plight of children in armed conflict. We support a training project for Blue Helmets who are going to face this plight on the ground.

Thirdly, we are committed to the elimination of all forms of violence against women, and in particular the practice of female genital mutilation.

In the wake of President Truman's words in San Francisco — "All progress begins with differences

of opinion and moves onward as the differences are adjusted through reason and mutual understanding" — Italy will continue ask the United Nations to be in the forefront in the prevention of genocide, the fight against all forms of discrimination, the protection of minorities and the elimination of religious intolerance.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Italy for the important statement he has just made.

Mr. Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Republic of Italy, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.

United Nations A/65/PV.83

General Assembly
Sixty-fifth session

Official Records

83rd plenary meeting
Monday, 28 March 2011, 11 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Deiss ..... (Switzerland)

The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

Agenda item 133 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/65/691/Add.8)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like, in keeping with established practice, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/65/691/Add.8, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/65/691/Add.7, the Federated States of Micronesia has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the United Nations Charter. May I take it that the General Assembly takes due note of the information contained in this document?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 122 (*continued*)

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

(a) Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/65/382 and A/65/716)

The President (*spoke in French*): Members will recall that the Assembly held the debate on agenda item 122 and its sub-items (b) to (w) at its 63rd and 64th plenary meetings on 13 December 2010, and agreed to take up sub-item (a) of agenda item 122 separately, at a later date to be announced.

Mr. Meetarbhan (Mauritius): It is my pleasure and honour to speak on behalf of the Group of African States. I wish first of all to express our appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting to consider the report of the Secretary-General (A/65/716) on the review of the 2006 Declaration (A/61/630, annex) on the ten-year capacity-building programme for the African Union (AU). Let me also express the African Group's appreciation to the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for the efforts they have deployed in the implementation of that important Declaration and for undertaking the first three-year review provided for therein.

In 2005, the General Assembly adopted resolution 60/1 within the framework of the World Summit, in which member States addressed the importance of meeting the special needs of Africa and agreed to the development and implementation of a ten-year plan for capacity-building with the African Union. After necessary consultations pursuant to that resolution, Mr. Kofi Annan, then Secretary-General, and Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, then Chairperson of the AU Commission, signed the Declaration entitled "Enhancing UN-AU Cooperation: Framework for the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union" in November 2006 at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Declaration provided for increased cooperation

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between the two organizations and for enhanced United Nations system-wide engagement with the AU, its regional and subregional organizations, and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) with a view to meeting the challenges of the African continent. The African Union fully endorsed the Declaration at the highest level and called for its full implementation.

The African Group commends the Secretary-General for undertaking the review process, and welcomes the recommendations on accelerating implementation of the ten-year capacity-building programme. While welcoming the initial focus of the ten-year capacity-building programme on peace and security, the African Group notes with appreciation the collaborative efforts of other organs of the United Nations with respect to other issues pertaining to Africa.

The African Group also wishes to underscore that, as the framework for United Nations system-wide support to capacity-building at the level of the African Union Commission and regional economic communities, the ten-year capacity-building programme also provides for cooperation in other areas of interest to African development, such as science and technology, climate change, poverty reduction, agriculture and the transformation of Africa's economy into a greener one.

At the signing of the Declaration, the then Chairperson of the AU stated that if the African Union had the capacity to undertake certain tasks on the African continent, it would unburden the United Nations. Indeed, the African Union and its regional economic communities have assumed a more prominent and proactive role in the maintenance of international peace, security and development, and intensified multifaceted cooperation with the United Nations at various levels.

The ten-year capacity-building programme therefore consolidates a mutually beneficial collaboration between the AU and the United Nations as each party draws on the comparative advantages of the other. We have no doubt that the evolving partnership will yield better results in building a more effective global coalition for international peace, security and development. To further realize that collaboration, we therefore call for enhanced information-sharing among the United Nations, the African Union and its regional economic communities, and for the allocation of adequate resources and expertise for the success of the programme.

The African Group seizes this opportunity to commend the support extended to African regional organizations by various United Nations organs, departments, offices, programmes and organizations prior to the adoption of the ten-year capacity-building programme. The African Group welcomes the steps taken by the United Nations for the integration of the ten-year capacity-building programme into the United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa in order to develop greater ownership and understanding of the capacity needs of the African Union, thus creating the necessary synergies to enhance specific actions aimed at the integration of the programme into the work of the various United Nations agencies and organs.

The African Group also welcomes the recommendations of the eleventh session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism, held in Addis Ababa in November 2010, where the need to ensure real ownership of the Programme by the African Union, based on its strategic plan and its own priorities, was underscored. The African Group is pleased to note the effective integration of the NEPAD programme with the AU Commission, which should facilitate coordinating the implementation of the ten-year capacity-building programme.

The African Group calls on the General Assembly to lend its full support to the recommendations of the eleventh session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism on strengthening the capacity of the joint secretariat of the AU Commission and the Economic Commission for Africa with a view to enhancing its human and financial capabilities for more efficient support for the programme's implementation.

The African Group looks forward to the successful realization of the ten-year capacity-building programme, as it draws on the benefit of lessons learned from past experience and goes beyond past programmes, such as the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. The African Group further looks forward to intensified action with respect to the implementation of the programme as an evolving dynamic process that would contribute towards filling the continuing gaps in the United Nations system pertaining to African

development issues. It is indeed the Group's sincere hope that the programme will contribute towards achieving higher standards of living in Africa by providing enhanced capacity for the valorization of Africa's diverse resources and potential.

In that connection, the African Group reiterates the need for the General Assembly and all international partners to strengthen their support for the implementation of the programme and to approve adequate funding and the necessary resources that may be required by the Secretariat and other United Nations agencies, the African Union and its regional economic communities to fulfil the objectives defined by the World Summit, with a view to meeting the special needs of Africa.

Mr. Tag-Eldin (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his reports "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations" (A/65/382) and "Review of the ten-year capacity-building programme for the African Union" (A/65/716). I would also like to align myself with the statement made by the representative of Mauritius on behalf of the Group of African States.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union represents a pioneering model of true partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations on the basis of the firm foundation provided for in Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, which underscores the role that can be played by regional arrangements.

The partnership between the United Nations and the African Union has expanded to include the areas of peacekeeping, the peaceful settlement of disputes, mediation and electoral assistance, as well as building the institutional capacity of the African Union in various fields within the framework of implementing the ten-year capacity-building programme for the African Union.

In that regard, Egypt stresses the importance of mobilizing the necessary resources for the programme's implementation, in particular in the light of the review process, which affirmed the existence of shortcomings in implementing its objectives owing to a lack of funding. Recent positive developments in the situations in Guinea and the Niger are examples of the significant impact of cooperation between the two organizations and with subregional organizations in supporting peace and stability on the African continent. Moreover, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the United Nations support package for the African Union Mission in Somalia are examples of ongoing cooperation between the two organizations in the area of peacekeeping.

The meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Security Council in July 2010 was held in the framework of the consultation mechanisms between the two bodies, as was its meeting with the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). All of those meetings are emblematic of the commitment of the two organizations and their main organs to enhancing the institutional dialogue between them. Egypt stresses the need to provide maximum support to the countries on the PBC's agenda, which are all African countries emerging from conflict. This requires all of us to work on enhancing the reconstruction efforts of African countries in the framework of full respect for national ownership and with increased funding from the Peacebuilding Fund.

The delegation of Egypt welcomes the ongoing cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union in many areas, especially the peaceful settlement of disputes and peacekeeping. In that context, Egypt underlines the importance of deepening the existing partnership, in particular by giving more attention to cooperation in the fields of economic and social development and by strengthening international support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development in the framework of the international community's commitment to supporting development efforts in Africa.

That commitment was highlighted in the final document (resolution 65/1) of the High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, held in September 2010. The final document emphasizes the need to address the development needs of Africa and the priority that all parties must give to fulfilling their commitments towards development in Africa. In that respect, the delegation of Egypt looks forward to the Fourth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, to be held in May 2011, as it will provide us with an important opportunity to reaffirm the commitments of the United Nations system and the international community towards the least developed countries, most of which are African.

I would also like to stress the importance of the international community's commitment to supporting Africa during the negotiations of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in 2012; during the second comprehensive review of the progress achieved in realizing the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS; and during the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, to be held in September on the sidelines of the sixty-sixth session.

Several positive steps have been taken to promote coordination between the United Nations and the African Union in the economic fields. In that regard, we would like to mention the annual meeting of the Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, organized by the African Union Commission in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa. The purpose of the meeting is to contribute to the formulation of African common positions on development challenges faced by African States. We believe that addressing those challenges requires concerted international efforts in the framework of the implementation of international development commitments.

Egypt firmly believes in the importance of strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union and of supporting the efforts of African countries to achieve peace, stability and development. On that basis, Egypt helps to enhancing the partnership between the two sides in the area of peacekeeping, particularly through its significant contribution to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and its support to the African Union Mission in Somalia.

In addition, in August 2010, Egypt hosted the first retreat of the special envoys of the United Nations and the African Union to Africa, which allowed for an exchange of ideas and experiences that would have a positive impact by strengthening coordination in the work of the envoys of the two organizations. Egypt will continue its support for the partnership between the two organizations to promote peace, stability and development on our African continent.

Many of the security, political and development challenges facing the African continent, as well as many recent developments on the international scene, clearly demonstrate the importance of complementarity between the universality of the United Nations and the regional approach in addressing various crises and conflicts. These elements are assuming special importance in light of the efforts being made to directly address the deeper characteristics, situations and problems in conflict or crisis areas. Egypt is hopeful that our discussions today will contribute to strengthening the existing partnership between the United Nations and the African Union, which is a key element in the success of our joint efforts to promote international peace and security and to support the development aspirations of the peoples of all Member States.

Mr. Nkombela (South Africa): It is my pleasure to address the Assembly today as part of its discussion of the reports of the Secretary-General entitled "Review of the ten-year capacity-building programme for the African Union" (A/65/716) and "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations" (A/65/382).

South Africa also aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Mauritius on behalf of the African Group.

My delegation is committed to the relationship between the United Nations and the African Union (AU). That relationship was established under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, which provides for regional arrangements to play a role in the maintenance of international peace and security, provided that such arrangements are consistent with the purpose and principles of the United Nations.

As we have envisioned, the effectiveness of the cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations, including in matters of financing and training, is a developing feature of that relationship. The effectiveness of that cooperation is also contingent on the availability of sustainable, predictable and flexible financial resources in support of peacekeeping operations in Africa.

The relationship between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council has been complementary. As the report of the Secretary-General on the ten-year capacity-building programme reminds us, the United Nations and the African Union, together with the regional economic communities, have carried out joint preventive diplomacy and

peacemaking activities for the resolution of crises throughout Africa.

The AU has benefited from its relationship with the United Nations within the framework of the peace and security cluster of the ten-year capacity-building programme. In that regard, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support have provided ongoing support to the operationalization of the African Standby Force, which is one of the critical pillars of the African peace and security architecture.

The leadership of the AU has been crucial in ensuring the smooth conduct of processes to establish peace and security in Africa. We have thus strengthened our coordination with the appointment of an African Union Commission focal point for the review of the ten-year capacity-building programme. Our goal should be to see a more robust African peace and security architecture, in which the African Standby Force is able to more effectively participate.

We recall that, following the adoption of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1), the Secretary-General sought to further the objectives thereof by signing the Declaration on the ten-year capacity-building programme for the African Union (A/61/630, annex) with the Chairperson of the AU Commission. The aim of the framework was to cover all aspects of cooperation between the two organizations, including peace and security; assistance in institution-building and in political and electoral matters; peacekeeping operations; governance, human rights and the rule of law; peacebuilding; humanitarian response, recovery and food security; social, cultural and health issues; and the environment. South Africa supports a broad approach to addressing the many challenges facing African countries through the promotion of the socio-economic development of the continent and respect for democracy, political reform, justice and human rights.

South Africa is committed to mobilizing for the renewal, advancement and development of Africa, and counts among our successes the Capacity Development Strategic Framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which was endorsed by the Assembly of the African Union at its fourteenth ordinary session, and the fact that the NEPAD Planning and Coordination Agency is now fully integrated into the AU.

We are pleased to be supporters of the movement forward for Africa through a larger, integrated and growing regional market that will enhance industrial development and investment and provide a basis for enhanced intra-African trade. South Africa has been honoured to have been asked to help coordinate the New Partnership for Africa's Development infrastructure revitalization initiative. African infrastructure development is a key priority, and my delegation is proud to recall that the African Union has agreed on criteria for project selection and has set clear time frames and targets.

My delegation believes that we can also agree that what is needed is further support to fully realize the potential of the mutually beneficial relationship between the AU and the United Nations. The establishment of the United Nations-African Union joint task force on peace and security and the upgrading of the United Nations Office to the African Union are steps in the right direction.

The further challenge remains collectively addressing funding, equipment, logistics and long-term capacity-building, as agreed in Security Council resolution 1809 (2008). Additionally, without a well-defined programme of work for the 10-year capacity-building programme, we will delay our achievement of the collective desire to see a peaceful and prosperous African continent. We should remember that not only does Africa deserve to win the peace, but that we also deserve to keep it.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): My delegation wishes to express its gratitude to you, Sir, for convening this thematic debate on cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union (AU), especially coming on the heels of the substantive session of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

The Nigerian delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Mauritius on behalf of the Group of Arab States and would like to highlight a few salient points on the subject.

Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations effectively laid the foundation for United Nations cooperation with regional organizations. The prevailing relationship between the African Union and the United Nations is therefore based on this fact.

Conflicts in Africa consume over 70 per cent of all the resources dedicated by the United Nations to peacekeeping, while eight of the 15 United Nations operations are located in Africa, with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo absorbing more peacekeeping personnel than any other United Nations peacekeeping mission. Given the primacy and legitimacy of the Security Council's responsibility in peacekeeping operations and the limited capacity of the African Union to respond to peace and security challenges in the continent, the African Union has been building on the synergy resulting from its collaboration with the United Nations to enhance the African peace and security architecture.

As the Prodi report (A/63/666) aptly recognized, the African peace and security architecture cannot operate in isolation. The imperative of a vision shared by the United Nations and the AU when addressing issues of mutual concern needs to be underscored. In this context, the establishment of the United Nations Office to the African Union at the African Union Commission was a significant step in the building of a long-lasting relationship, particularly in supporting long-term capacity-building, which must not only transcend military deployment, but should also focus on overall capacity across a wide spectrum of activities.

For this reason, the need to develop a robust regional structure for peace and security remains a daunting challenge. It is in this regard that Nigeria calls for support of the African Union's existing peace and security architecture, including the Peace and Security Council, the Continental Early Warning System, the Panel of the Wise, the African Standby Force, the Special Fund and post-conflict reconstruction. We believe that the full operationalization of this architecture and sustained support for individual structures constitute the key to peace and security on the continent. For example, a robust Special Fund would enable the continent to overcome the perennial problem of sustaining peacekeeping operations. Africa would require credible, predictable, sustainable and flexible financing from assessed contributions of Members of the United Nations.

The African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the increasing consultations between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council are proud examples of the evolving relationship between the African Union and the United Nations. But we must not rest on our oars. The Nigerian delegation asserts that the relationship between the African Union and the United Nations must also address those fundamental problems that hinder peace on the continent, particularly the issues of development that are germane to the absence of peace in Africa.

Peace and development are coterminous. The absence of one means the futility of the other. It is in this context that the African Union's evolving relationship with the United Nations must be so structured as to also involve cooperation between the Economic and Social Council and the New Partnership for Africa's Development. Nigeria believes that sustainable peace on the African continent will be better served when the people enjoy a better life as a matter of their right.

The issue of the environment must be at the heart of the relationship between the United Nations and the African Union. The emerging threats of environmental degradation, leading to such natural catastrophes as climate change, global warming and flooding, highlight the need for sustainable action. The United Nations and the regional organizations, in particular the African Union, should be at the vanguard of such global action. In our world today, we realize that wars can be fought between nations, but that a war against nature is one that must alert us to an ever-present danger that we must, of necessity, collectively face together as the human race.

In the world of the strong, only the feeble, the weak and the vulnerable suffer. Africa continues to be the dumping ground of small arms and light weapons, as well as drugs, exacerbating the situation of insecurity within the region. Despite all expectations for a global form of action to be taken, no treaty is yet in sight. Perhaps one way that the United Nations can collaborate on this issue of serious regional, if not global, concern is to take serious steps towards the actualization of a treaty that will not only ban but track and monitor the illegal use of small arms and light weapons. Notwithstanding the ongoing efforts of the United Nations to track and monitor the illegal sale and use of small arms and light weapons, the time is ripe to introduce the instrumentality of a treaty, which will demonstrate our collective resolve to halt this regional and global menace.

Let me reiterate that a close relationship between the United Nations and the African Union will not only bolster the capacity of the African Union to confront the challenges of our times, but will also address some of our aspirations for a more prosperous, viable and peaceful world in the future.

Mrs. Bibalou (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): It is especially gratifying for me to take the floor on behalf of my country, Gabon, on agenda item 122 (a), "Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union", and the associated reports of the Secretary-General (A/65/382 and A/65/716). I take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General on the sterling job he has done. My delegation endorses the statement made by the representative of Mauritius on behalf of the Group of African States.

I do not intend to provide an overview of all the fields in which the United Nations has contributed to capacity-building of the African Union on the basis of document A/61/630, the annex of which contains a follow-up Declaration to the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1). However, I would like to make a few comments on a number of initiatives that are especially dear to my delegation.

In the course of the general debate of September 2010, the States Members of the Organization reaffirmed the role of the United Nations in global governance. Over and above the adoption in 2006 of the ten-year capacity-building programme for the African Union, the support provided by the United Nations for African Union activities, in terms of both peace and security and of economic, social, cultural, financial and human development, is part and parcel of our vision of such governance.

In this regard, my country welcomes all of the activities of the Organization and its specialized agencies in providing effective support to African Union capacity-building. Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union is not only necessary but also vital, given the leadership role of the former and the close links between the concepts of peace and security, governance and development on our continent. We must develop complementarity between the expertise of the African Union on the ground and the resources available to the United Nations and its specialized agencies, with a view to maximizing our results.

That is the approach taken by the United Nations with respect to support for peace and security in Africa, particularly through the Panel of the Wise in the field of mediation, electoral assistance, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, logistical support for the African Union Mission in Somalia, and assistance to peacekeeping and peacebuilding. That has also been the case with respect to economic, social or cultural development issues such as the promotion of the objectives of the Planning and Coordination Agency of the New Partnership for Africa's Development; support in the fields of education, agriculture, the environment and climate change; and the manifold actions to counter violence against women.

As regards the Central African subregion in particular, my country welcomes the opening in Libreville on 2 March of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, which will work in close collaboration with the bureau of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). The opening of the Office falls within the context of prevention rather than of intervention. This structure, which is the second of its kind on the continent after the United Nations Office for West Africa, will help to consolidate peace, promote conflict prevention, fight against cross-border problems such as drug trafficking and organized crime, and prevent possible cases of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

We should stress that mediation and preventive diplomacy have always been given pride of place by my country as effective means of resolving crises. Furthermore, the adoption in 2010 of the Kinshasa Convention, a legally binding instrument for controlling small arms and light weapons in Central Africa, at the thirtieth ministerial conference of the 11 States members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, also falls within the context of capacity-building both of ECCAS and the African Union. My country, which is host to the Office, thanks the United Nations for this initiative and assures it of our fullest cooperation in making it a success.

Before concluding, I should point out that, notwithstanding this strong cooperation, some inadequacies need to be redressed. Indeed, it is not so much the number but the quality of actions that matters. In this regard, the United Nations and the African Union are working to adopt a programme with

clear-cut objectives, including improved coordination between United Nations bodies and regional economic communities of the African Union, as well as the mobilization of resources.

The President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate. The General Assembly has thus concluded the current phase of its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 122.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.

United Nations A/65/PV.84

General Assembly
Sixty-fifth session

Official Records

84th plenary meeting
Monday, 4 April 2011, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Deiss ..... (Switzerland)

In the absence of the President, Mrs. Waffa-Ogoo (Gambia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 74 (*continued*)

Oceans and the law of the sea

(a) Oceans and the law of the sea

Report on the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects (A/65/759)

Draft resolution (A/65/L.65)

The Acting President: Members will recall that, under sub-item (a) of agenda item 74, the Assembly adopted resolution 65/37 at its 59th plenary meeting on 7 December 2010, and decision 65/545 at its 78th plenary meeting on 15 March 2011.

I give the floor to the representative of Saint Lucia to introduce draft resolution A/65/L.65.

Mr. St. Aimee (Saint Lucia): My country has the honour to sponsor draft resolution A/65/L.65, entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea", along with Australia, Brazil, Canada and New Zealand. I should like to begin by expressing appreciation for the cooperation exhibited by all delegations involved in negotiating the draft resolution.

By adopting the draft resolution today, the General Assembly would endorse the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects, as contained in document A/65/759.

It is sometimes forgotten that the marine environment plays a critical role in the health of the terrestrial environment, with which we are more familiar. We therefore cannot ignore it in our analysis of and discussions on topics such as climate change, food security and biodiversity. We therefore need to know much more about the state of this sector of our planet, and it is our hope that equal attention will be given to monitoring and reporting as well as to the measures that may be necessary, as a result of our findings, for improvements and corrections.

We look forward to the convening of the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole at the end of June 2011 to address the outstanding issues identified in the report of the first meeting, held in February.

On behalf of my co-Chair, Ms. Renée Sauvé, I wish once again to thank all delegations for their cooperation during the February meeting and during the informal consultations on the draft resolution. We are particularly grateful for the assistance of the Mission of Canada, through Mr. Keith Morrill, who led the negotiations to their conclusion last Tuesday.

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We look forward to agreement on all of these very important matters through the adoption of this draft resolution by consensus today.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/65/L.65. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/65/L.65?

Draft resolution A/65/L.65 was adopted (resolution 65/37 B).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 74.

Reports of the Fifth Committee

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now consider the reports of the Fifth Committee under agenda items 129 and 135.

I request the Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee, Ms. Nicole Ann Mannion of Ireland, to introduce the reports of the Fifth Committee before the General Assembly in one intervention.

Ms. Mannion (Ireland), Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee: I have the honour today to present to the General Assembly the reports of the Fifth Committee containing recommendations on issues that required action during the first resumed part of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

The Fifth Committee met from 7 to 25 March and held four plenary meetings and numerous rounds of informal consultations and informal/informal consultations. I therefore have the honour to present the following brief report on the work of the Committee.

Concerning agenda item 129, entitled "Programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011", the Committee recommends to the General Assembly, in paragraph 8 of its report contained in document A/65/646/Add.2, the adoption of two draft resolutions. Draft resolution I deals with special subjects relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011, and draft resolution II relates to the capital master plan; both were adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Under agenda item 135, entitled "Joint Inspection Unit", the Committee recommends to the General Assembly, in paragraph 6 of its report contained in document A/65/796, the adoption of a draft resolution, which was adopted without a vote.

I wish to thank all delegations for their cooperation during this session. I should also like to thank the members of the Fifth Committee secretariat for their consistent hard work and dedication in supporting the work of the representatives in the Fifth Committee. Special thanks must go to Mr. Moses Abelian, who is now moving on from the post of Secretary of the Committee after seven years and whose wisdom and tireless efforts on behalf of the Committee will be sorely missed.

Finally, I should like to congratulate the new Secretary of the Fifth Committee, Ms. Sharon van Buerle, on her new position. We look forward to working with her in the future.

The Acting President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Fifth Committee that are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote. The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records. May I remind members that, under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, that is, either in the Committee or in plenary meeting, unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Fifth Committee, unless members are notified otherwise in advance.

Agenda item 129 (*continued*)

Programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/65/646/Add.2)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it two draft resolutions recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 8 of its report.

We will now take a decision on draft resolutions I and II.

We turn first to draft resolution I, entitled "Special subjects relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011". The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution I was adopted (resolution 65/268).

The Acting President: Draft resolution II is entitled "Capital master plan". The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft resolution II was adopted (resolution 65/269).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 129.

Agenda item 135

Joint Inspection Unit

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/65/796)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

We will now take a decision on the draft resolution entitled "Report of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2010 and programme of work for 2011". The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 65/270).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 135.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.

United Nations A/65/PV.85

General Assembly
Sixty-fifth session

Official Records

85th plenary meeting
Thursday, 7 April 2011, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Deiss ..... (Switzerland)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Tragedies in Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The President (*spoke in French*): On Friday, 1 April, a violent attack against the United Nations took place in Mazar-i-Sharif, killing and injuring many staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. The day before, a volunteer with the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire was shot and killed in Abidjan. I strongly condemn those attacks and express my sincere condolences to the grieving families.

In addition to those attacks, in recent days several United Nations staff members have lost their lives while carrying out their tasks on behalf of the international community, including in the airplane accident in Kinshasa and other tragic circumstances. I believe all of us grieve each time that someone working for the United Nations pays for their commitment with their lives or by being injured. In tribute to the courage and commitment of those men and women who served the United Nations, I now invite the General Assembly to stand and observe a minute of silence.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The President (*spoke in French*): Members will recall that the General Assembly concluded its consideration of agenda item 50 at its 62nd plenary meeting, on 10 December 2010. In order to enable the General Assembly to consider the draft resolution before it today, it will be necessary to reopen our consideration of agenda item 50. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen its consideration of that item?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): Representatives will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 17 September 2010, the General Assembly allocated agenda item 50 to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee). In order for the Assembly to proceed expeditiously on this item, may I take it that the Assembly decides to consider the item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): May I further take it that the Assembly agrees to proceed immediately to the consideration of agenda item 50?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 50 (*continued*)

International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

Draft resolution (A/65/L.67)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to begin our consideration of this item by making some opening remarks.

Today more than ever, we cannot ignore what is taking place elsewhere in the world. Everything moves

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faster and everything is closer. For many decades now, the pace of progress made by science and technology has increased unimaginably. We have just had a prime example of that, with three cosmonauts addressing us from outer space. The development of high-speed transport and innovations in information and communication technologies have shortened distances and made us more mobile. The world as well as the risks and challenges we face — to which the United Nations and the international community must respond — have of course become more complex. However, new possibilities and greater benefits for humankind have also emerged.

The first human space flight, whose fiftieth anniversary we commemorate this year, was a landmark in human history and technological progress. The initiative of the delegation of the Russian Federation to propose making 12 April the International Day of Human Space Flight will provide us an opportunity to pay tribute both to the courage of Yuri Gagarin and to the individual merit of other Soviet cosmonauts and the team that supported them. This international day could also be a useful opportunity to reflect upon the contribution of this mission to scientific progress.

The venture into space led to developments in such diverse areas as meteorology and agriculture, satellite navigation and telecommunications and biology and physics. Today, such flights last for days and even months, and citizens from various countries are working together in a space station. Crucially, international cooperation also occurs in outer space. That is especially important for us at the United Nations.

The international community should ensure that outer space is explored and used for peaceful purposes. This is one of the hallmark activities of the United Nations. In that connection, I would like to commend the commitment of Member States and the efforts of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs.

It is said that during his flight aboard *Vostok-1*, Yuri Gagarin marvelled that our planet was blue. We on Earth know that this effect is produced by the many oceans, seas, forests, mountains, glaciers and a plethora of other natural treasures. It is our collective responsibility both to ensure that, seen from the skies, our Earth remains blue and that we use our natural resources in a measured and sustainable manner.

I wish to underscore the important contribution made by space exploration in that regard. Technologies developed through space exploration are employed in such diverse areas as the fight against global warming, desertification and biodiversity loss. By way of example, satellite imagery is making an essential contribution to assessing the risk of natural disasters.

The positive effects of the use of outer space are substantial. It is essential that we ensure that as many people as possible can benefit from that, and international cooperation is instrumental to that end. I therefore encourage members to pursue and intensify the efforts of the United Nations for the peaceful uses of outer space. It is in that spirit that I call on members to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Yuri Gagarin's achievement.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation to introduce draft resolution A/65/L.67.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me first to share with the members of the Assembly an address by the President of the Russian Federation.

> "I welcome participants in the special meeting of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly devoted to the fiftieth anniversary of the first human space flight.
>
> "Russia is rightly proud of the fact that the first and the most decisive step in the exploration of outer space was taken on 12 April 1961 by our compatriot, Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin. His flight became one of the most striking and significant events of the twentieth century, starting a new chapter in the history of mankind.
>
> "In the past 50 years, space has become a special area of foremost achievements. Those include space walks, the establishment of orbital space stations, where various scientific and technological experiments are carried out, and flights to other planets. Equally important, outer space has become a platform for close, open and fruitful international cooperation to the benefit of universal peace and development.
>
> "Large-scale multilateral programmes and projects, namely, Apollo-Soyuz, Intercosmos and Shuttle-Mir, have been carried out within the framework of that cooperation. The International

Space Station is working successfully. The day 12 April, celebrated every year in Russia as Cosmonautics Day, is a tribute to the joint success in the exploration of the universe, the courage and boldness of its brave conquerors and many years of work by scientists, designers and engineers. From now on, it will be a universally recognized commemorative day — the International Day of Human Space Flight.

"I am sure that multilateral cooperation in the exploration and use of space for peaceful purposes will extend to an increasing number of countries and will promote joint efforts to find solutions to global problems and the scientific and technical progress of civilization. As Sergey Korolev, a leading spacecraft designer, said, 'the future of cosmonautics has no limits and its prospects are as infinite as the universe itself'.

"I wish the meeting's participants fruitful work and all the best."

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have gathered here today to mark a very important milestone in the history not only of our country but, without any exaggeration, of all mankind. On 12 April 1961 the road to new heights, namely, man's exploration of outer space, was opened.

Broad interest in outer space arose as a result of the launch in 1957 by the Soviet Union of the first artificial satellite and grew with every new achievement and development in space technology. News of the human space flight was met with particular enthusiasm. Not only at home but throughout the world, Yuri Gagarin became the embodiment of humanity's achievements.

Already at the beginning of the space age, it became clear that the exploration of outer space was not possible without cooperation among States and the drafting of rules and laws for peaceful cooperation. The role of the United Nations as a forum to discuss all aspects of cooperation in the peaceful use of outer space has always been invaluable.

In 1959, the United Nations reacted to developing trends by establishing the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. This year, the Committee will meet in Vienna for its fiftieth anniversary session. Today, the peaceful use of outer space includes the entire range of issues covered by the world Organization's activities.

The 1967 Outer Space Treaty has become the keystone of the ever strengthening international legal basis. International cooperation on the peaceful use of outer space is for the benefit and in the interest of all States, regardless of their economic, social, scientific and technological development, and is the achievement of all humanity. Together, we must carry out much work to ensure that space is used exclusively for the progress of the human civilization.

Today, flights into space are no longer anything extraordinary. Over 50 years, more than 500 people from 38 countries have visited space. Even the term space tourism has emerged. As technology develops and becomes more accessible, the number of States actively participating in space activities will certainly increase.

Humanity's space odyssey — the fruitful cooperation of many States in outer space — would have been impossible without the first step, that is, Yuri Gagarin's flight. It is highly symbolic that recently, the Gagarin spacecraft carried a Russian-American crew to the International Space Station.

In the year of the fiftieth anniversary of Yuri Gagarin's feat, the Russian Federation has prepared and submitted draft resolution A/65/L.67, whose objective is to declare 12 April the International Day of Human Space Flight, to be celebrated internationally every year.

The draft resolution is short and its content is clear. Its provisions will not require any additional financial expenditure for the Organization. We are convinced that the adoption of the draft resolution will serve as an important contribution to strengthening cooperation on the peaceful use of outer space.

More than 60 countries have expressed interest in sponsoring the draft resolution. We are grateful to them all for their support. We call on the representatives of States present in the General Assembly Hall today to support Russia's draft resolution.

We hope that from today, for all humanity 12 April will be celebrated as the International Day of Human Space Flight. The atmosphere of this Day will always be full of aspiration towards the future, as it was 50 years ago, when the first astronaut on Earth

launched a new era in the history of humanity — the space era — in his famous "We're off".

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/65/L.67, entitled "International Day of Human Space Flight".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the publication of draft resolution A/65/L.67, the following countries have also become sponsors: Algeria, Azerbaijan, Costa Rica, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Greece, Guyana, Honduras, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Norway, Poland, Portugal, San Marino, Slovakia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, the United States of America and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The President (*spoke in French*): May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/65/L.67?

Draft resolution A/65/L.67 was adopted (resolution 65/271).

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now give the floor to those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Kőrösi (Hungary) (*spoke in Russian*): It is my particular pleasure to speak on behalf of the European Union at this very special plenary meeting of the General Assembly to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the first human space flight.

(*spoke in English*)

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Serbia; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

(*spoke in Russian*)

As we have heard and seen today, and as we all know, the first human space flight, on 12 April 1961, was not only an impressive technical achievement but a major milestone in human history. Major Yuri Gagarin, a cosmonaut and the commander of the spaceship *Vostok-1*, became a hero not only to his people but also to the whole of the international community. Following his flight, qualities such as bravery, modesty, confidence, professionalism, leadership and team spirit became forever associated with cosmonauts. Gagarin's legacy will stay with us into the future. It is an honour that we have adopted today a resolution proclaiming the International Day of Human Space Flight.

(*spoke in English*)

Space makes an important contribution to the economies of the world and affects our daily lives in many ways for the common good of all mankind. It plays a vital role in the monitoring of our planet and the protection of the environment. Moreover, space exploration has brought technical advances to the material sciences, computing, engineering, communications, biomedicine and many other fields.

With the help of satellites, we are now able to see our home planet in detail. Space probes have made landings on distant planets, moons and asteroids, journeying to the very edge of our solar system. Orbiting astronomical telescopes have given scientists magnificent insights into the creation of life and of the whole universe.

Europe, in partnership with Russia, the United States, Japan and Canada, is sharing in the International Space Station project. Working through the European Space Agency, Europe is exclusively responsible for the European Columbus laboratory and the Automated Transfer Vehicle, the two key elements of the Station.

The European Union is fully committed to strengthening the security of activities in outer space in the context of expanding space activities that contribute to the development and security of States.

The growing number of actors and the rapid development of activities in outer space reinforce the long-standing position of the European Union and its member States in favour of the enhancement of the multilateral framework concerning the preservation of a peaceful, safe and secure environment in outer space.

To that end, the European Union is promoting the elaboration of an international, voluntary code of conduct for outer space activities — a tool that would

strengthen the safety, security and predictability of all space activities. Such a code should, among other things, limit or minimize harmful interference, collisions or accidents in outer space, as well as the creation of debris.

(*spoke in Russian*)

The prevention of an arms race in outer space and the need to prevent outer space from becoming an area of conflict are essential conditions for the strengthening of strategic stability. The European Union continues to promote international cooperation aimed at the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

Today, with the adoption by the States Members of the United Nations of a resolution on an International Day of Human Space Flight, we bow our heads in memory of the heroes of the space era, first and foremost among them the first man who went into space and who opened the path for all of us.

Mr. Mac-Donald (Suriname), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): On behalf of the Chinese delegation, I should like to welcome the convening of this special meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of human space flight.

On 12 April 1961, astronaut Yuri Gagarin of the former Soviet Union made the first space flight on *Vostok-1*, thus opening a new chapter in the human exploration of outer space. We see the need to commemorate this important day and reaffirm the contribution made by the first human space flight to the development of space science and technology.

We welcome the adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution designating 12 April as the International Day of Human Space Flight. That will help us to remember that historic moment, reaffirm the commitment to the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes and ensure that those technologies serve the interests of humankind as a whole. We also thank the Russian delegation for having put forward this initiative.

Over the past 50 years, thanks to the efforts of scientists from all countries, great progress has been made in human space flight. Although the process has not been a smooth and easy one, human exploration of outer space has never stopped. To date, nearly 40 countries have sent astronauts into space.

We are very pleased that China is making a contribution in that respect. Since 1999, China's human flight project has successfully completed seven flights, sent six astronauts into space three times and carried out a space walk. This year China will carry out the first rendezvous and docking flight and has begun to build a space station.

With the utmost confidence and courage, China will explore the unknown and make determined advances, thereby promoting, and making our contribution to, the cause of human space flight.

We should like to reiterate that we will always abide by the basic principles set out in the Outer Space Treaty and conduct all exploration and use of outer space for the benefit of humankind as a whole. We are ready to strengthen our cooperation with the international community in the exploration and use of outer space and in making advances in space science and technology for the benefit of all countries, in particular the developing countries. We hope that the international community will work together to promote harmony in the use of outer space, which is good for peace, development, cooperation and the rule of law.

Finally, I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on its fiftieth anniversary. We appreciate the leading role played by the Committee in the promotion of the peaceful use of outer space, the improvement of outer space legislation and the deepening of international cooperation. China will continue to promote the cause of the peaceful use of outer space together with all other countries.

Mrs. Pessôa (Brazil): We are gathered here today to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the first human space flight. In a letter to Galileo Galilei, written in 1609, Johannes Kepler observed that

> "Ships and sails proper for the heavenly air should be fashioned. Then there will also be people who do not shrink from the dreary vastness of space".

We salute the pioneers who inaugurated the promising era of the exploration and use of outer space, the province of all mankind, for peaceful purposes.

On that distant day of 12 April 1961, when Yuri Gagarin was launched into outer space and orbited the Earth on board the *Vostok-1* spacecraft, one hardly could have anticipated the benefits that space technology would provide to life on our shared planet.

Today, space technology is an integral part of the everyday life of citizens around the globe. It has greatly contributed to resolving some of the most pressing issues through its applications for forecasting the weather, preventing natural disasters, protecting the environment, providing humanitarian assistance, controlling pandemics, imparting long-distance education and supporting sustainable development. It generates products and services for communications, imaging and navigation, which are essential for the functioning of several spheres of activity in our contemporary world.

Brazil is pleased to have sponsored resolution 65/271, which declares 12 April the International Day of Human Space Flight. As a developing country, we are convinced of the need to invest in our own space programme for peaceful uses and in benefit of our sustainable development. We rely on the cooperation of international partners, but we also do our part in partnering with other developing countries to promote the peaceful uses of space technology in several areas of societal benefit.

We are firmly convinced of the need to use outer space for peaceful purposes and to ensure, through international cooperation, including South-South cooperation, that all nations have access to the products of space applications for their development and the enhanced well-being of their people.

We are sure that the General Assembly's adoption of today's resolution will promote awareness of the importance of space technology so that the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes can be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries.

Mr. Ragaglini (Italy): In taking the floor, Italy endorses the statement made by the representative of Hungary on behalf of the European Union and wishes to add some comments in its national capacity.

Fifty years ago, on 12 April 1961, Flight Major Yuri Gagarin entered the *Vostok-1* space capsule and the annals of human history when his ship was launched into orbit around the Earth. I can still remember that moment — although I was, happily, much younger than I am now — and how it felt to know that humankind had breached the final frontier, inaugurating a new era in science and exploration. Gagarin's name was on everyone's lips. He was a hero who inspired people around the world with his skill, his demeanour and his bravery.

Gagarin's achievement also brought within human grasp, into tangible reality, a world that had long been celebrated in the masterpieces of imagination. In Italy, the celestial spheres were envisioned by our first poets, and the greatest of them, Dante Alighieri, dedicated his magnum opus, The Divine Comedy, to the heavens. The first book, the Inferno, concludes with the famous indelible image of the two pilgrims emerging from the underworld to contemplate the sky above:

> "We climbed up, he first and I behind him, far enough to see, through a round opening, a few of those fair things the heavens bear. Then we came forth, to see again the stars." (*Inferno, Canto XXXIV*)

Another great Italian, Galileo Galilei, turned his telescope towards the stars some three centuries later and made discoveries that forever altered our view of the universe. When he published his findings in the *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, he chose to do so not in Latin, the scientific language of the day, but in a modern language, Italian.

In the modern era, Italy's space adventure began in the 1960s. After Russia and the United States, we were the third country to launch its own satellite, the San Marco 1, on 15 December 1964.

That heritage makes me all the more proud that one of the astronauts speaking to us from the International Space Station today is Paolo Nespoli, an Italian national. He will soon be joined by another Italian, Roberto Vittori, marking the first time that Italy will have two astronauts working together on the International Space Station.

Nespoli and Vittori join an illustrious list of predecessors to cap off a series of Italy's contributions to the human exploration of space. As one of the first countries engaged in space exploration, Italy became a founder and key partner in the European Launcher Development Organization and the European Space Research Organization, both established in 1962.

Those organizations would later merge to form the European Space Agency, in 1975.

More recently, in February 2010, a special module called the Cupola, designed and built entirely in Italy, was brought on board the International Space Station. The Cupola provides seven large windows through which to observe the Earth and the universe.

Let me take this opportunity to highlight what has become perhaps the most significant aspect of human space exploration. Where once there was a race to space, now there is cooperation among countries, best exemplified by the International Space Station itself. The Station represents an international partnership comprised of Europe, Russia, the United States, Japan and Canada, with each country lending its own resources and expertise to that common project.

There could thus be no forum more appropriate in which to celebrate human space flight than here, at the United Nations, where we join together as one family in celebrating the achievements of humankind over the past 50 years. That is why we praise and support the initiative of the Russian Federation to declare 12 April the International Day of Human Space Flight.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): I am honoured to deliver my statement to the General Assembly on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the first human space flight.

The exploration of and human ventures into outer space are an integral part of my country's history. It is a history that enables Kazakhstan to claim its rightful position as an international launching pad and space harbour. It was from the Baikonur launch pad, aboard the *Vostok-1* spacecraft, that Yuri Gagarin ushered in the era of space flight on 12 April 1961.

Kazakhstan is of course a sponsor of resolution 65/271, whose adoption we welcome. Clearly, a great many journeys to other planets and galaxies will be made in the future, but Yuri Gagarin's accomplishment will always be warmly remembered as magnificent, timeless, historic and legendary. With his 108-minute flight into space, he exemplified not only the triumph of science, engineering and technology, but also the irrepressibility of human endeavour and its infinite possibilities.

Baikonur is the world's first and largest operational space launch facility. Like Cape Canaveral in the United States and the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in China, Baikonur is fully equipped to launch various types of rockets, including manned and unmanned spacecraft. Baikonur celebrated its fiftieth anniversary on 2 June 2005. Over the past 50 years, more than 1,500 spacecraft of various types were launched into space, including 38 types of rockets and more than 80 categories of spacecraft.

The President returned to the Chair.

The word Baikonur in Kazakh means fruitful land. The people of Kazakhstan saw the cosmonauts take off from there with great anticipation and excitement. We were always overjoyed when space crews returned to Earth after their long and courageous efforts in outer space. We were proud that it was on Kazakh soil that cosmonauts again felt the gravity of their home planet, saw the blue sky overhead and received our warm and friendly embrace. I know that these sentiments are shared by cosmonauts from 23 Member States. Kazakhstan can truly be proud of its two cosmonauts, Toktar Aubakirov and Talgat Musabayev, who are members of the international group of space travellers.

Baikonur opened a great many chapters in the history of astronautics. One of the highlights of these innovations was the dawn of the era of space tourism, when on 28 April 2001 an international crew was launched from Baikonur, including the first space tourist, the American Dennis Tito.

Kazakhstan attaches great significance to developing its own space activities as an important and sustainable source of innovative technologies and progress. For us, this is an issue of international competitiveness that will give powerful impetus to national industrial development. The creation of a full-fledged space industry is one of the priority areas of our national policy directly supported by the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Kazakhstan is implementing its national programme for space development on the basis of broad international cooperation with Russian, European, American and several other partners. Since our independence, we have developed the necessary legal framework for cooperation and undertaken joint projects with the Russian Federation, France and other leading countries.

Kazakhstan has formulated its space development policy in accordance with the relevant international

conventions, agreements, obligations and United Nations resolutions. We champion the peaceful use of outer space.

Kazakhstan is ready to continue to work within the framework of multilateral efforts to fulfil the objectives of the United Nations in the field of the peaceful use of outer space in the twenty-first century to guarantee the collective security of all of humankind.

Mrs. Hernández Toledano (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The dawn of space exploration was one of humankind's greatest achievements in the past century. When, 50 years ago in 1961, the Soviet Union launched the first human space flight, it heralded a new era of exploration, research and international cooperation in the use of outer space. Cuba therefore commends the timely initiative of the Russian Federation to hold this meeting of the General Assembly and the proposal to celebrate 12 April as the International Day of Human Space Flight.

For Cuba, this meeting and the resolution we have just adopted (resolution 65/271) are particularly meaningful. Only three months after his historic flight into space, Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin visited Cuba. He won the hearts of our people, who welcomed him like a son. Hundreds of thousands of Cubans turned out to see him receive the Order of Playa Girón in the Plaza de la Revolución.

During his time in our country, Gagarin stated that the day would come when Cuba could send its own cosmonauts into space. His prediction came true. To the great pride of the Cuban people, history was made in 1980 when Arnaldo Tamayo became the first cosmonaut from Cuba, and the first from Latin America and the Caribbean, to travel to space. During that voyage, more than 20 research experiments prepared by Cuban and Soviet scientists were carried out, which later had important practical applications.

Cuba firmly believes that the peaceful exploration of outer space will contribute to the preservation of the human race. That is why we firmly reject the development of an arms race in space. It is unacceptable that certain countries continue to spend astronomical sums on war plans, including in outer space. If this continues, not only will the promising future of space applications be destroyed, but their very existence will be threatened.

Space belongs to humankind as a whole and should only be put to such noble uses as the pursuit of sustainable development and the prevention of natural disasters. The right of all States to explore and use outer space for the benefit of humankind is a universally accepted principle. This is why, even though the number of States participating in space activities is growing, there is an urgent need for greater bilateral and multilateral cooperation, in particular through the sharing of experience and technology, especially with developing countries.

The role of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space should be strengthened. Moreover, relations between the Committee and the Commission on Sustainable Development should be promoted with a view to ensuring that space technologies are applied for the good of development.

Gazing down at our planet from space during his 108-minute flight in the *Vostok-1* spacecraft on 12 April 1961, Yuri Gagarin exclaimed "People of the world, let us safeguard and enhance this beauty — not destroy it!" On the fiftieth anniversary of the first human space flight, we could pay no greater tribute than to commit together to realize that wish of the first cosmonaut.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this plenary meeting of the General Assembly to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the first human flight to outer space. I also thank the delegation of the Russian Federation for the initiative that led to this event.

We are gathered here today to celebrate not just a single event — the launch of a spaceship and its pilot, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin — we are here to celebrate what his flight stood for, namely, exploration, adventure, scientific discovery and development. The flight was a huge milestone in the history of humankind. By turning a dream cherished by generation after generation of leaders, scientists, writers and ordinary people around the planet into reality, the flight heralded a new age of activities in space exploration, contributing immensely to man's ability to improve the quality of life on Earth.

In addition to the tremendous successes recorded in subsequent human space flights and robotic discoveries across the solar system, human beings now have unprecedented insights into Mother Earth's systems from orbiting satellites. That also includes

incredible advances in biological and physical research. Increased international cooperation in space science has also helped diminish the mystery of the unknown universe and bring down the frontiers of space in the interests of all.

Conscious of the role that space science plays in development, Viet Nam attaches great importance to research in this field. As early as 1979, the Government of Viet Nam set up a commission on space research to prepare for the joint Soviet-Viet Nam human space flight. As a result, the first Vietnamese cosmonaut, hero and pilot Pham Tuan, successfully undertook his joint mission with Russian cosmonaut Viktor Gorbatko in such a flight aboard Soyuz-37, which lasted 7 days, 20 hours and 42 minutes, from 23 to 31 July 1980. The flight enabled the Vietnamese cosmonaut to conduct experiments on melting mineral samples in microgravity, carry out experiments on plants and perform aerial photographing of Viet Nam for mapping purposes.

For the exploration of outer space to serve the interests and benefit of all humankind and for international cooperation in this field to be fruitful, the international community must also strengthen efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space. While supporting and contributing to the exploration of outer space for peaceful purposes, Viet Nam supports the consideration of further measures in the search for agreements to prevent an arms race in outer space, including the weaponization of outer space, in accordance with the spirit of resolutions 65/68 and 65/97, as well as other previous Assembly resolutions. We support the conclusion by the Conference on Disarmament of a treaty to this effect.

In line with this fundamental policy on space activities, in 2006 the Government of Viet Nam adopted its strategy on research and application of space technology by 2020, which states that all activities in the research and use of outer space must be aimed at peaceful purposes, contribute to the prevention of a possible arms race in outer space and strengthen international cooperation in formulating a legal framework for the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful ends.

It is also in line with this fundamental policy on space activities that Viet Nam was a sponsor of resolution 65/271, presented by the Russian Federation, as we are convinced that it will further promote the effective peaceful use of outer space for the benefit of all humankind.

Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri (India): On 12 April 2011, the world will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the first human flight into space. Our delegation appreciates the initiative of the delegation of the Russian Federation to hold this special plenary meeting to introduce the draft resolution declaring 12 April as the International Day of Human Space Flight (resolution 65/271) in honour of Yuri Gagarin's space flight. We are happy to have been a sponsor of the resolution. I also take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, and members of the General Assembly on this historic occasion.

I would like to mention that India is celebrating the twenty-seventh anniversary of space flight by an Indian. Rakesh Sharma was the first Indian to go into space, aboard the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' Soyuz-T11 from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on 3 April 1984.

India's own *Chandrayaan-1*, with many international payloads, including one from the United States, was instrumental in conclusively establishing the presence of water and hydroxyl molecules on the lunar surface. India performed a unique joint experiment known as a bistatic experiment, involving *Chandrayaan-1* and NASA's lunar reconnaissance orbiter spacecraft, on 21 August 2009, in order to obtain additional information on the possibility of the existence of ice in a permanently shadowed crater near the north pole of the Moon. Additionally, the analysis of data obtained by the miniature synthetic aperture radar on-board the *Chandrayaan-1* spacecraft has provided evidence for the presence of ice deposits near the Moon's north pole.

Chandrayaan-2, India's second mission to the Moon, will be launched on India's geosynchronous satellite launch vehicle some time in the 2012–2013 time frame. It will have an orbiter and land a rover module. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will have the primary responsibility for the orbiter and the rover. The Russian Federal Space Agency will be responsible for the lander. The goals of the mission are to further improve the understanding of the origin and evolution of the Moon, using instruments on board the orbiter and in situ analysis of lunar samples using the lander and rover.

ISRO is carrying out studies on undertaking human space flight to carry human beings to low-Earth orbit and ensure their safe return. It has initiated pre-project activities to study technical and managerial issues relating to undertaking a human mission, with an aim to build and demonstrate our capability. The programme envisages the development of a fully autonomous orbital vehicle carrying two or three crew members to about 300 kilometres in low-Earth orbit, including their safe return.

The emphasis of the Indian space programme has always been on integrating the advances in space technology and applications with national development goals, particularly in vital service areas such as telecommunications, television broadcasting, meteorology, disaster warning and natural resource surveying and management. We place considerable importance on international cooperation in space activities, mainly in taking up new scientific and technological challenges and defining international frameworks for the exploitation and utilization of outer space for peaceful purposes.

India continues to provide expertise on services for supporting developing countries in the application of space technology through capacity-building. The Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific, which is affiliated with the United Nations and operates from India, has so far benefited 894 scholars from 31 countries of the Asia-Pacific region and 28 scholars from 17 countries outside that region. India would like to request more participation from member countries.

Under the Severe Thunderstorm Observations and Regional Modelling Programme of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, India is providing a Doppler weather radar to its member countries. India is also committed to sharing the data obtained from its Indian Remote Sensing satellites within the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations for disaster management support. We recently made an arrangement with Brazil to provide RESOURCESAT-1 data.

The myriad beneficial developments that have flowed from space research and exploration have been enumerated by many of those who have spoken before me. The first spaceflight by Yuri Gagarin was a pioneering human achievement in the exploration of outer space. India considers the declaration of 12 April as the International Day of Human Space Flight in honour of Yuri Gagarin as a tribute to human efforts in space exploration and the harnessing of the potential of space for the benefit of humankind. India supports resolution 65/271.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): Humanity's journey beyond Earth famously began as the space race — a high-stakes struggle for security and prestige between two competitors, the United States and the Soviet Union. Today, the space race is over and, thanks to the remarkably improved atmosphere of cooperation, we have all won.

Space exploration is no longer a competition. It is a vital aspect of modern science and an endeavour requiring close cooperation between international partners in pursuit of our scientific and technological goals. The United States and Russia's work together on space science and exploration has long been, and continues to be, a model of productive partnership between nations. Earlier this week, Russia's Soyuz mission was the latest to carry both Russian and American nationals to the International Space Station. Next week, the chiefs of our space agencies, NASA and the Russian Federal Space Agency, will meet in Moscow to discuss future projects and missions that will push the frontiers of human knowledge of space farther than ever before.

The accomplishments of space exploration stretch beyond learning about our planet and universe and have provided the technological basis for innovations in computer technology, medicine, renewable energy and countless other fields. What is more, human space flight has turned into one of the world's truly international undertakings, with citizens from more than 30 different countries — from Afghanistan to Viet Nam — travelling beyond Earth's atmosphere. In the coming years, those intrepid explorers will be joined by citizens from other nations.

The fiftieth anniversary of human space flight is a proper occasion to reflect upon humanity's achievements in space and to renew our commitment to realizing our common aspirations. Through cooperative space exploration, all nations that operate in space find their horizons broadened, their knowledge enhanced and the lives of their citizens improved. As President Kennedy said in 1962,

> "We set sail on this new sea because there is new knowledge to be gained, and new rights to be

won, and they must be won and used for the progress of all people."

Those words ring just as true today. For all these reasons, the United States is honoured to have been a sponsor of the resolution we have just adopted, and to join in the commemoration of this historic milestone.

Mrs. Kolontai (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Republic of Belarus, including as a former Soviet republic, enjoys a long history of participation in space exploration programmes. Soviet cosmonauts participating in the exploration of outer space included natives of Belarus, Petr Klimuk and Vladimir Kovalenok. In 1978, two Belarusian cosmonauts were in orbit simultaneously. The Republic of Belarus participated in many space programmes of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, starting in the early 1960s. That served as an important stimulus for the development of the scientific and industrial complex of Belarus in the field of space technologies.

Currently, Belarus is actively implementing its national space programme for the period 2008 to 2012, whose goal is the effective use of the space sector's accumulated scientific and technological potential for the social and economic development and individual industrial sectors of Belarus, including for the benefit of our citizens and the purposes of science education.

The Republic of Belarus fully supported and joined as a sponsor the resolution initiated by the Russian Federation proclaiming 12 April as the International Day of Human Space Flight, which underscores the historic importance of space flight in the development of humankind (resolution 65/271). As the great Russian scientist Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, who was one of the founders of today's space activities, said, "Earth is the cradle of mankind; but one cannot live one's whole life in a cradle". The importance of Yuri Gagarin's flight as man's first step into outer space is clear, just as is the need to continue to integrate international scientific space achievements.

The delegation of Belarus fully associates itself with the provisions of the resolution we have adopted. The resolution attaches great importance to international cooperation for the peaceful use of outer space, in which the United Nations must play an important role.

In conclusion, allow me to express our conviction that the Assembly's adoption of this resolution and the proclamation of 12 April as the International Day of Human Space Flight will not only underscore the universal importance of this event, but will also serve as the United Nations contribution to strengthening international cooperation for the peaceful use of outer space.

Mr. Nazarian (Armenia): I would like to thank the delegation of the Russian Federation and the other sponsors of resolution 65/271, which we have just adopted and which signifies the importance of space science and technology for achieving sustainable development goals and increasing the well-being of societies. The diverse sponsorship of the resolution reflects the willingness of many Member States from different regions to further promote and expand the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

Fifty years ago, Yuri Gagarin's words "Let's go!" at the beginning of the first manned flight into space marked a new page in world history and opened the way for space exploration for the benefit of all humankind.

A decisive role in realizing the flight was played by academician Sergei Korolev and the Council of Chief Designers created under his leadership, a body that was unprecedented in the history of science. Putting together the talents and skills of many outstanding scientists, engineers and researchers, the Council made it possible to put a man in space.

It is with honour that we note that the esteemed ranks of the Council included Armenia's own Andronik Iosifyan, who served as the chief designer of the All-Union Scientific Research Institute of Electromechanics. Under his leadership, the Institute became responsible for solving the diverse electrical engineering problems that arise in rocket and space technologies.

In addition to the numerous members of the Armenian scientific community who have played a prominent role in developing space technology, such as Grigor Gurzadyan, who is considered to be the founder of radio astronomy, there were others who were directly involved in the work leading to Gagarin's flight, including Ruben Chachikyan, the chief designer in charge of pressurization elements within the landing system, and Armen Mnatsakanyan, one of the chief designers for the space radio system, who at that time

headed the Scientific Research Institute of Precision Instruments.

I am proud to say that today Armenia continues to be actively involved in this difficult knowledge-intensive field that is so vital for the development of economies, even if it is constrained to some degree by the difficulties that our country continues to face.

The outstanding work of the Yerevan Physics Institute's cosmic ray division in the area of space weather, which is endorsed by the United Nations and undertaken in collaboration with a number of the sponsors of today's resolution, and that of the Institute's Electric Sky Project, which is at the forefront of the research on the not yet well understood but powerful and important electrical phenomena in the upper atmosphere, are just a couple of examples of the research currently being done in Armenia.

We note with satisfaction that as a result of international cooperation progress has been achieved in furthering the goals of space science and technology education. In that context, Armenian scientists currently cooperate with a number of space-related organizations in connection with their research, including NASA, the European Space Agency, the Russian Federal Space Agency, the Committee on Space Research and others. The success of our common goals in this respect depends heavily on global cooperation. We hope that this resolution once again reaffirms the importance of that fact.

Today, we fully recognize the usefulness and significance of that international endeavour. Our scientific community is ready to continue its international and regional cooperation programmes with a view to achieving a convergence of positions on many issues of common concern in the peaceful uses of outer space.

Let me conclude simply by saying that Armenia remains entirely supportive of the increasingly important role of the United Nations in ensuring that outer space is maintained for peaceful uses and exploration and that the achievements of space science and technology are applied for the benefit of all peoples.

Ms. Ochir (Mongolia): Space science and technology touch many aspects of our daily lives and make a significant contribution to the advancement of human development. It is therefore difficult to overestimate the historic importance of the first human space flight, on 12 April 1961, undertaken by Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin.

The first human flight in outer space was indeed a milestone in human history, paving the way for space exploration for the benefit of all humankind. It was an event that captivated, and will never cease to captivate, the minds of people all over the world. For those who made that flight possible, it was also the result of their genius and many years of arduous work. On behalf of my Government, I would like to congratulate the Russian Federation and its people on the fiftieth anniversary of that historic achievement.

The first human space flight established a great legacy not only of space exploration, but also of international cooperation in that area, which has benefited many countries, including Mongolia. A vivid example is the Soviet Intercosmos programme for international cooperation in space exploration, which enabled a joint Mongolian-Soviet space flight to take place on 22 March 1981, with the first Mongolian cosmonaut on board. During their seven-day flight, the joint Mongolian-Soviet crew successfully performed a total of more than 30 scientific experiments and studies in the fields of space physics, technology, medical biology, remote sensing and other areas. The joint crew thoroughly photographed and surveyed Mongolia's territory from space, which provided invaluable insights into its geography, natural resource reserves, geology, agricultural land, surface waters and climatic conditions.

Thanks to the Intercosmos programme and the outstanding Soviet cosmonauts who supported our cosmonaut during the flight, Mongolia became the tenth country out of the more than 30 countries that so far have travelled into space, as well as the twentieth country to have carried out scientific experiments in space. That example vividly demonstrates how far-reaching the legacy of Gagarin's space flight was by making it possible for small developing countries such as Mongolia to benefit directly from space exploration.

Mongolia is proud to have been a sponsor of resolution 65/271, which declares 12 April as the International Day of Human Space Flight.

Mr. Cujba (Republic of Moldova): At the outset, I would like to express our gratitude to you, Mr. President, for having convened this plenary meeting to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Yuri

Gagarin's flight to outer space. Commemorating the first human flight to space once again acknowledges the relevance of that most remarkable event of modern history to the future development and progress of humankind.

Along with the launching of the first man-made satellite, the first manned space flight opened new horizons and frontiers for human endeavours and established the beginning of space research and exploration, revealing unprecedented prospects for the world. Undoubtedly, the half century that followed became an era of space science and the peaceful uses of outer space for the well-being of humankind.

The increased number of States capable of launching satellites, the work of international crews in outer space, and common interest in promoting and expanding its exploration and use for peaceful purposes have become a reality and form an integral part of international cooperation and of everyday life. The benefits derived from space applications have transformed the way people look at their environment and planet, influenced their communication and interaction and changed the way people move from one place to another, greatly increasing its safety, security, accuracy, predictability and convenience.

Equally, the development of space science and the practical applications of its achievements through the production and implementation of innovative technologies in various fields was an important prerequisite for the advancement of economies and sustainable development.

Over the past five decades, the United Nations has played, and continues to play, an important role not only in the exploration and peaceful use of outer space, but also in ensuring that the benefits of space activities are shared by all nations. As the standing body concerned exclusively with such tasks, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its two subcommittees have been successful in fostering international cooperation in space activities, especially in meeting new scientific and technological challenges and in defining an international framework for the exploitation and peaceful use of outer space.

It remains the central focal point for United Nations Member States to seek avenues for further enhanced partnerships in advancing research and space science, devising programmes and United Nations technical cooperation and integrating advances in space technologies and applications into development goals.

The United Nations should further strengthen its role in shaping international standards for space activities and in promoting cooperation and coordination at the global, regional and interregional levels. The increased international cooperation and contribution of all countries participating in the peaceful uses of outer space development activities can maximize the benefits of space capabilities in the service of humanity and create a positive change with regard to climate change, desertification, biodiversity loss, the energy crisis and artificial and natural disasters.

Space exploration and its peaceful uses are a great achievement of mankind, and the international community should develop new forms of collaboration for the benefit and prosperity of all States. We believe that the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary and the declaration of 12 April as the International Day of Human Space Flight will give new impetus to international cooperation in outer space activities. We hope that today's resolution 65/271 will make a solid contribution to sustainable space exploration in the service of all humanity.

The President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker on this item. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 50?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.

United Nations A/65/PV.86

General Assembly
Sixty-fifth session

Official Records

86th plenary meeting
Monday, 18 April 2011, 10. a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Deiss ..... (Switzerland)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Ntwaagae (Botswana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 51 (*continued*)

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/65/422/Add.1)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Rapporteur of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), Mr. Mohammad Wali Naeemi of Afghanistan, to introduce the report of the Committee.

Mr. Naeemi (Afghanistan): I have the honour to introduce to the General Assembly the report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) submitted under agenda item 51, entitled "United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East", as contained in document A/65/422/Add.1.

During the main part of the Assembly's sixty-fifth session, the Committee decided to defer its consideration of the report of the Secretary-General (A/65/705) on strengthening the management capacity of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East until 2011. The Committee considered that report at its 25th meeting on 24 March.

The draft resolution submitted under this agenda item is contained in paragraph 9 of the report of the Fourth Committee that is before the Assembly. The Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of that draft resolution.

The Acting President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) that is before the Assembly this morning.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: We will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fourth Committee in paragraph 9 of its report, which is entitled "Report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the management capacity of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East". A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel

The draft resolution was adopted by 123 votes to 1 (resolution 65/272).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Armenia, Comoros, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guyana, Iraq, Ireland, Jordan, Mauritania, Spain, Swaziland and the United States of America advised the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 51?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 10 *(continued)*

Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS

Conference Room Paper (A/65/CRP.4)

Draft decision (A/65/L.71)

The Acting President: Members will recall that, in its resolution 65/180, of 20 December 2010, adopted under this item, the General Assembly requested the President, following appropriate consultations with Member States, to draw up a list of relevant civil society representatives, other than those already included in the resolution, and to submit that list to Member States for consideration on a no-objection basis for a final decision by the Assembly.

After the necessary consultations, the General Assembly now has before it a conference room paper that has been circulated as document A/65/CRP.4, which contains the list of civil society representatives invited to participate in the high-level meeting, including panel discussions. In that connection, the General Assembly also has before it a draft decision issued as document A/65/L.71.

The Assembly will now take action on the draft decision, entitled "Participation of civil society representatives in the high-level meeting on a comprehensive review of the progress achieved in realizing the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, to be convened from 8 to 10 June 2011".

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt the draft decision?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 10.

Agenda item 12 *(continued)*

2001-2010: Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa

Draft resolution A/65/L.70

The Acting President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held the debate on agenda item 12 jointly with agenda item 62 and its sub-items (a) and (b) at the 30th and 31st plenary meetings, which were held on 14 October 2010.

I give the floor to the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania to introduce draft resolution A/65/L.70.

Ms. Maduhu (United Republic of Tanzania): On behalf of the African Group, I have the honour to introduce, under agenda item 12, the draft resolution entitled "Consolidating gains and accelerating efforts to control and eliminate malaria in developing

countries, particularly in Africa, by 2015", as contained in document A/65/L.70.

The draft resolution seeks to acknowledge the progress we have made together in fighting malaria, which is one of the greatest health and economic challenges facing developing countries, particularly in Africa, which continues to carry the heaviest burden. The draft resolution seeks to consolidate those gains and to renew political support for significantly increasing global efforts to control and eventually to eliminate malaria by the original target date of 2015.

The *World Malaria Report 2010* of the World Health Organization (WHO) provides evidence that where there is political will, it is possible to contain, and to eventually eliminate, malaria. The report shows that funding for malaria in 2010 reached the unprecedented level of $1.8 billion. We welcome that development, although we appreciate that the target for that year was actually $6 billion. So, yes, we have made some progress, but we need consolidation and significant expansion.

The increased funding was the key to improving access to insecticide-treated mosquito nets over the past three years. Between 2008 and 2010, approximately 289 million nets were delivered across sub-Saharan Africa, with an estimated 42 per cent of African households owning at least one net in 2010 and 35 per cent of children under five years of age sleeping under a net. That is progress, but our shared goal is universal coverage, so we still have a long way to go. We should also bear in mind that we must make provision for replacing those nets that are reaching the end of their effective lifespan, which is three years.

The increased funding also made possible significant expansion in indoor residual spraying, with the number of people thus protected in sub-Saharan Africa increasing from 13 million in 2005 to 75 million in 2009. That too is progress, but it covers only 10 per cent of the population at risk. We have more work to do.

As the incidence of malaria decreases, it becomes even more important to have the capability for rapid diagnosis to differentiate malaria from non-malaria fevers. Thanks to increased funding, the number of malaria cases confirmed by diagnostic test has risen from less than 5 per cent at the beginning of the past decade to 35 per cent in 2009. It is certainly progress, but we need to consolidate and expand that capacity as too many malaria cases are still not properly diagnosed.

In 2005, only five countries could provide sufficient courses of artemisinin-based combination therapies to cover more than 50 per cent of patients treated in the public sector. Thanks to policy changes within countries and increased funding, 11 African countries were already providing coverage to 100 per cent of malaria cases seen in the public sector by the end of 2009, with a further eight African countries providing sufficient courses to treat between 50 and 100 per cent of cases. That is progress, but much more needs to be done before all cases can be covered.

All such intervention has resulted in a significant reduction in the global malaria caseload and malaria-related deaths. In my own country, for instance, malaria has almost been eliminated in Zanzibar, which gives us the momentum to roll out the same effort throughout the entire United Republic of Tanzania. At least 11 African countries and 32 malaria-endemic countries outside Africa saw a decrease of more than 50 per cent of confirmed malaria cases between 2000 and 2009.

Again, that is welcome progress, but we must bear in mind the goal established by the World Health Assembly in 2005 to reduce the number of malaria cases and deaths recorded in 2000 by 50 per cent, or more, in all countries by the end of 2010 and by 75 per cent, or more, by 2015. We should also bear in mind the importance of improving the health statistics of developing countries, and intensify efforts to improve the capacity for monitoring and surveillance to ensure that we respond promptly to the resurgence of malaria and resistance to anti-malaria medicines.

This year's draft resolution has been updated from last year's resolution 64/79. While the draft resolution maintains last year's language, it has been technically updated and new developments have been recognized. The new elements in the draft resolution are as follows.

The year 2010 marked the end of the Decade to Roll Back Malaria. In that regard, we changed the title of the draft resolution.

The draft resolution welcomes the leadership provided by the African Leaders Malaria Alliance and their continued commitment to the 2015 targets. It also encourages them to continue to provide political leadership at the highest level in the fight against malaria in Africa. The draft resolution also welcomes the Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health, which aims to reduce maternal,

newborn and under-five child mortality, including from malaria.

The draft resolution acknowledges that, despite the increased global and national investments in malaria control having decreased the burden of malaria in some countries, with a few even moving towards the elimination of malaria, many countries continue to have unacceptably high burdens of malaria, most of them in Africa. It also emphasizes the importance of strengthening health systems to effectively support malaria control and elimination.

The draft resolution urges the international community, the United Nations and all other stakeholders to participate in the funding and implementation of the Global Malaria Action Plan. It calls for scaling up malaria prevention, control and treatment in order to meet internationally agreed malaria goals.

Lastly, the draft resolution requests the Secretary-General, in close collaboration with the Director-General of the World Health Organization and in consultation with Member States, to report on the implementation of the present resolution at the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly and on progress to achieve the 2015 Abuja Declaration targets and those of the Global Malaria Action Plan and Millennium Development Goal 6.

The consultations on the draft resolution have been extremely open and transparent. We thank all the delegations that participated in the consultations for their constructive engagement, which made consensus possible. We especially thank all the delegations that sponsored the draft resolution, and we request others to join the sponsorship today. We thank the Secretariat, our partners at the WHO and the Roll Back Malaria project, the Office of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Malaria and all others who provided valuable support.

Before we take action on the draft resolution, I would like to propose the following revision to paragraph 9. In that connection, the word "supports" in the final clause of the paragraph should be deleted. The clause should therefore read as follows: "takes note of the work of the Leading Group on Innovative Financing for Development and its special Task Force on Innovative Financing for Health, which has been recently set up."

It is our expectation that, as in previous years, the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/65/L.70, entitled "Consolidating gains and accelerating efforts to control and eliminate malaria in developing countries, particularly in Africa, by 2015", as orally revised.

We shall now proceed to take action on the draft resolution.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/65/L.70, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Monaco, Montenegro, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Suriname, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

The Acting President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/65/L.70, as orally revised?

Draft resolution A/65/L.70, as orally revised, was adopted (resolution 65/273).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 12?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 122 *(continued)*

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

(a) Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union

Draft resolution (A/65/L.68)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held a debate on sub-item (a) of agenda 122 at its 83rd plenary meeting, on 28 March.

I now give the floor to the representative of Mauritius to introduce draft resolution A/65/L.68.

Mr. Meetarbhan (Mauritius): It gives me great pleasure to introduce, on behalf of the African Union and the African Group, the draft resolution entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union", which is contained in document A/65/L.68. At the outset, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to all delegations and partners for their constructive contributions in formulating this draft resolution.

Cooperation at different levels, whether subregional, regional or international, represents the key to unlocking opportunities for sustainable growth and development. The Constitutive Act of the African Union attaches great importance to the transformation of Africa into a stable and developed continent where the younger generation can confidently envisage a bright future. Although significant strides have been made in that direction, we still have a long way to go. Today's draft resolution, which I have the honour to present, seeks to promote the spirit of cooperation between the African Union and the larger international community, represented by the United Nations, towards the further realization of this goal.

Both the African Union and the United Nations have as their founding principles holistic development, and thus the two organizations are called upon to work concurrently and complementarily. We in Africa are happy to note that cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union has intensified in recent years, as demonstrated by the numerous collaborative efforts made in a whole range of areas. This strategic relationship between the two organizations needs to be enhanced so as to promote a more effective partnership that embodies the principle of mutual respect when addressing mutual concern and challenges. The challenges are many; I will list three of them.

First is the issue of peace and security. Though much progress has been achieved in some parts of the continent, the issue of peace and security remains a challenge in certain other parts. Peace is a prerequisite for human, social and effective economic development, which are critical to the achievement by Africa of national, regional and international goals such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In this regard, the draft resolution stresses the need for the two organizations to cooperate closely to address the problems posed by landmines, illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, terrorism and transnational organized crime. We welcome the launch in September 2010 of the Joint Task Force on Peace and Security of the United Nations and the African Union. This will act as an important framework for furthering the strategic partnership on peace and security between the United Nations Secretariat and the African Union Commission.

Secondly, with respect to the issue of development, although Africa is rich in both human and natural resources, it has yet to realize its full potential. Many factors are responsible for underdevelopment, many of which are external. In this regard, the draft resolution calls upon the United Nations system to continue its support for the African Union and its member States in their efforts to implement the MDGs. It is also crucial for the international community, in order to promote the economic and social development of the continent, to ensure the effective, coordinated and integrated implementation of the Doha Development Agenda, the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development, the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development, the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the 2005 World Summit Outcome. Furthermore, we would like to underscore once again the urgent need for the successful and timely completion of the Doha round of trade negotiations, including negotiations aimed at substantial improvements in areas such as trade-related measures, including market access, to promote a sustained growth path in Africa.

Thirdly, I should like to touch on the issue of institutional development. To achieve sustained growth in Africa, there is an urgent need for the promotion and strengthening of the institutional structure and framework for good governance and for the effective implementation of development initiatives. The continent welcomes the pivotal role that subregional groups are playing in institution-building to promote the socio-economic and political development of their respective regions. However, the lack of expertise and resources in many areas brings to the fore the need for greater cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union in reinforcing institutions. We therefore appreciate the various initiatives taken by the United Nations and its agencies in that regard.

Furthermore, the African Group commends the Secretary-General for undertaking the review of the 2006 declaration for the 10-year capacity-building programme for the African Union, and welcomes the recommendations regarding the acceleration of the implementation of the programme.

We are also confident that the establishment and reinforcement of the United Nations Office to the African Union in Addis Ababa would lead to more intense interaction and substantially improve coordination, in the context of more proactive engagement by the United Nations in existing and emerging areas of cooperation with the African Union.

The draft resolution acknowledges the close cooperation between the two organizations and highlights the vital issues to which both the United Nations and the African Union should give priority and attention, namely, peace and security, in particular with regard to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peacemaking, post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding; support for the democratization process and good governance; and development and humanitarian issues.

The draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union is presented for consideration by the General Assembly and it is our sincere hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/65/L.68.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/65/L.68, the following countries have joined as sponsors: Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Lithuania, Malta, Montenegro, New Zealand, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The Acting President: May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/65/L.68?

Draft resolution A/65/L.68 was adopted (resolution 65/274).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 122?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.

United Nations A/65/PV.87

General Assembly

Sixty-fifth session

Official Records

87th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 26 April 2011, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Deiss ..... (Switzerland)

In the absence of the President, Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 133 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/65/691/Add.9)

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like, in keeping with established practice, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/65/691/Add.9, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/65/691/Add.8, Grenada has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the United Nations Charter. May I take it that the General Assembly takes due note of the information contained in this document?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 69 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(c) Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster

Special commemorative meeting in observance of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): This morning, the General Assembly, in accordance with resolution 65/131, of 15 December 2010, will devote a special commemorative meeting to the observance of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe.

(*spoke in English*)

Today we mark 25 years since the Chernobyl nuclear accident, the most severe accident in the history of the nuclear power industry, which caused a huge release of radionucleids over large areas of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The region's mostly rural economy was devastated and more than 300,000 people were uprooted from their homes. Livelihoods lost almost 25 years ago have yet to be fully recovered and numerous farming villages are still struggling to overcome poverty, exclusion and the stigma of contaminated regions.

The Chernobyl anniversary is an occasion both to remember the human cost of the disaster and to take stock of the many problems that still linger. But it is also a time to look ahead and seek solutions that hold promise for the affected communities and to renew our commitment to a safer future.

The General Assembly and the United Nations Development Programme have had an important role in the response to the Chernobyl disaster. The General

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Assembly first adopted a resolution on Chernobyl in December 1990, and in 2002 the Assembly adopted a resolution shifting its strategy on Chernobyl from that of emergency relief to one of long-term recovery and development. This new approach has already begun to yield practical results. The 2007 General Assembly resolution on Chernobyl designated the period of 2006 to 2016 as the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development for Chernobyl-affected Regions. The United Nations Action Plan on Chernobyl for the period up to 2016 was prepared as a framework for ensuring that the area fully overcomes the stigma it now suffers, communities take full control of their lives and normalcy becomes a realistic prospect.

Let us also acknowledge the Governments of the three countries most affected by Chernobyl — Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine — for working to protect the affected populations from the effects of radiation and to mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl accident, as well as for their ongoing efforts to rebuild the affected areas and promote socio-economic development, thus building a better future for the communities.

We must recognize that much more remains to be done to promote the region's recovery. The affected communities require fresh investments, socio-economic development, new jobs and accurate information on how to live safely in conditions of low-dose radiation in some areas, and on healthy lifestyles in general. The resilience of those still coping with the disaster is remarkable, but they need our continued support. In that context, we welcome the outcomes of the pledging conference that took place last week in Kyiv, which raised over €550 million. We want to encourage the international community, the General Assembly and United Nations agencies to continue and increase their international cooperation on Chernobyl.

Finally, in view of the nuclear disaster in Japan, it is imperative that we demonstrate, through global solidarity and the continued commitment of all stakeholders, that we have the ability to bring an end to a nuclear legacy such as that of Chernobyl.

As we mark this anniversary, we stand in solidarity with those whose lives were changed by the tragedy. Only by working together will we be able to bring this region back to normal life fully. As we gather today, let us pay tribute to the memory of the victims and to the hundreds of thousands of disaster relief workers at the site of the Chernobyl tragedy.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: It is one thing to read about Chernobyl, another to see it for yourself. Anyone visiting that infamous site, as I did last week, will be profoundly moved — the giant reactor, encased in concrete, yet still deadly; the empty town and nearby villages, houses in ruin and the land contaminated. Chernobyl displaced hundreds of thousands of people and affected millions more. It cast a radioactive cloud across Europe, and a shadow around the world.

Yet, there is a larger and more encouraging story, one of international solidarity. Chernobyl was not a problem for Ukraine, Belarus or Russia alone. Chernobyl was our problem, a shared challenge for the world. That is why the United Nations has done everything possible to promote recovery. We have an Action Plan on Chernobyl and we are supporting the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development.

Echoing the past — echoing Chernobyl — events at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant remind us once again of the dangers of nuclear accidents.

Nuclear accidents respect no borders. They threaten human health and the environment. They disrupt the economy and devastate communities. They are global in effect. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster is a time for reflection and robust global debate.

Nuclear power will likely continue to be an important resource for many nations, and can be a part of a low-carbon-emission energy mix in our efforts to address climate change. But it has to become credibly safe, and globally so. In that regard, I pay tribute to President Viktor Yanukovych of Ukraine for his vision in organizing the Kiev Summit on Safe and Innovative Use of Nuclear Energy last week, long before issues of nuclear safety made had it back to the world's front pages.

At the Summit, I put forward a five-point strategy for a safer nuclear future. I called for a top-to-bottom review of current safety standards at the national and international levels. I advocated strengthening the work

of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on nuclear safety. I supported the holding of an IAEA ministerial meeting on nuclear safety in June. I raised the need to focus on the nexus between nuclear safety and natural disasters. I said that we needed a new cost-benefit analysis of nuclear energy. And I called for building a stronger connection between nuclear safety and nuclear security.

It is time to face the facts. Issues of nuclear power and safety are not purely matters of national policy; they are a matter of global public interest. That is why, in September, I will convene a meeting of world leaders to take a hard look at all these issues. It is time to undertake a serious global debate on this issue at the level of global leaders. We must treat nuclear safety as seriously as we treat nuclear weapons.

The images of Chernobyl will stay with me a long time. They have taken their place alongside others: the desolation of Kazakhstan's former nuclear test site at Semipalatinsk, which I visited one year ago; and the bravery and resilience of the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki — the Hibakusha — who I met in Japan last summer. The world is learning from these experiences.

In Chernobyl, I also saw signs of hope. The soil is still contaminated, but forestry projects are reviving the land. People are starting to return in small numbers. Last week, countries pledged €550 million to continue work on a new shelter for the damaged reactor. That shield is expected to last another 100 years.

What we need now is a shield to protect our wider world. A shield forged at the United Nations, with Members' help and support, that will ensure that nuclear power plants are sources of peaceful energy, not potential catastrophe. Twenty-five years ago, people chanted, "No more Chernobyls". Together, let us say that again today, and act.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Valentin Rybakov, Assistant to the President of Belarus on Foreign Policy.

Mr. Rybakov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): It is my honour to read out an address by our President, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, President of the Republic of Belarus, before this special meeting of the General Assembly dedicated to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster.

"On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, I am addressing the United Nations as the leader of the country that, by a tragic coincidence of circumstances, received the heaviest and still tangible impact of the radiation.

"For Belarus, the Chernobyl catastrophe resulted in thousands of square kilometres of contaminated land. It changed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people and caused damage in the billions to the economy of the country. Even for the much more powerful economy of the Soviet Union, it was an almost backbreaking burden. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, our young sovereign State found itself facing a huge spectrum of social and economic problems.

"In the 25 years that have elapsed since the accident, large-scale activities aimed at overcoming the consequences of the catastrophe and restoring the affected territories have been carried out unceasingly.

"We are guided by a clear, carefully considered strategy. In the years immediately following the accident, key attention was given to programmes aimed at resettling people in clean areas and at providing them with decent living conditions. At present, we are directing our efforts to economic revival and the sustainable development of the affected territories. Land re-cultivation and the cleaning of the lakes and rivers of Belarus all contribute to improving ecological security in the region.

"To this day Chernobyl's problems lie heavy on the shoulders of the Belarusian people. To overcome the consequences of the accident, Belarus spends $1.2 million a day. Just think about this figure. In spite of the fact that only a small proportion — less than 1 per cent — of that amount comes from the international community, I would like to express my appreciation to the United Nations and to donor countries for the assistance they have rendered to our country. We are especially thankful to those partners that do not engage in political games and do not build

their business on the sufferings of ordinary people.

"The Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions, proclaimed by the General Assembly in 2007, help to intensify such cooperation. It is necessary to fully and effectively implement the relevant United Nations action plan on Chernobyl. It is important, in the context of our cooperation, to move from holding conferences and symposiums to implementing projects in the affected territories that have concrete economic and social results.

"Of course, it is necessary to meet and discuss existing problems, but there is a far greater need to adopt modern technologies in agriculture and forestry in the affected areas that will result in profitable production and the creation of new jobs. It must become our common task to ensure that each and every cent carefully scraped together by the international community is delivered to the affected people and territories.

"In the 25-year period following the Chernobyl accident, the Republic of Belarus has accumulated invaluable theoretical, practical and organizational experience in overcoming the consequences of radiation's impact. The progress in overcoming the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant made by Belarus with the assistance of the United Nations, donor countries and charitable initiatives inspires a certain optimism.

"Today the attention of the international community is focused on the tragedy at the Fukushima nuclear power plant in Japan. Our country is ready to share its scientific and practical experience in overcoming the consequences of this type of catastrophe. In dealing with the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl plant, we have proved that human compassion and sympathy, economic and scientific cooperation, persistence and consistent efforts to restore the regions affected can change the situation and provide an opportunity to build a better future for the people who live there.

"On this day, we call for adherence to these principles so that international support and assistance can have fruitful results for the benefit of peoples and countries."

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Assistant to the President of Belarus on Foreign Policy.

I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Pankin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Today marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, which became the worst technological catastrophe of the twentieth century in terms of its scope and complexity.

Today, at a memorial ceremony held in Chernobyl in connection with the anniversary, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said:

> "Today I have sent to our partners in other countries, including in the Commonwealth of Independent States, a proposal to ensure the safe development of nuclear energy in the world and the elimination of its tragic consequences. We will need to give thought to a new international convention in this area. We must do so in memory of those who suffered and to save humankind."

The President of Russia also said:

> "The Chernobyl issue, although it is a problem primarily for three countries — Russia, Ukraine and Belarus — is shared by the entire international community. We now need to build a new sarcophagus for the reactor, and 28 countries have pledged to make donations. Russia is also ready to make a contribution to the Chernobyl containment fund in the amount of 45 millions euros."

The Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States, at a meeting held in Moscow in December 2010, launched an appeal to the international community to intensify cooperation aimed at mitigating the consequences of that catastrophe and at ensuring the recovery of the areas affected.

We deeply appreciate the courage and selflessness of the hundreds of thousands of Chernobyl disaster relief workers, who, putting their health and their lives at risk, fulfilled their duty and protected people from the harmful effects and further spread of

radiation. Paying tribute to the memory of the victims, the heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States proclaimed 26 April as the International Day Commemorating Victims of Radiation Accidents and Catastrophes in the States members of the Commonwealth.

More than 200,000 Russian nationals took part in emergency relief operations in the aftermath of the disaster. Over 59,000 square kilometres, encompassing 14 regions of Russia, were contaminated. Approximately 3 million Russian people lived in those territories.

Despite the large-scale emergency response measures aimed at addressing and mitigating the consequences of the catastrophe taken both immediately following it and in subsequent years, the Chernobyl nuclear power plant remains a potential source of danger. Minimizing this threat in the near future through the use of new technologies is in everyone's interest. There is therefore a need to utilize the scientific, technical and financial capacity of the entire international community.

In the Russian Federation, efforts to minimize the effects of the Chernobyl disaster are focusing on overcoming the negative health-related, social and psychological consequences of the disaster, improving the living standards of the population in the affected areas and helping to restore normal conditions.

In this context, a number of programmes are being implemented in Russia. The federal budget funds provided between 1992 and 2010 for programme-related measures carried out in the vicinity of Chernobyl, at the prices for the corresponding years, are approximately 10 billion rubles.

As I have said, the consequences of Chernobyl were felt in a number of countries. The Russian Federation is working with other countries and international organizations on matters related to overcoming the consequences of the disaster. Cooperation between Russia, Belarus and Ukraine has been developing actively. Russia is an active participant in the Chernobyl Forum. The Russian Federation's Ministry of Emergency Situations manages Russian involvement in projects undertaken with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Health Organization and UNICEF in order to overcome the negative consequences of the catastrophe.

Russia attaches particular importance to further international cooperation on Chernobyl. In that connection, we are convinced that it is necessary that the work in the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions (2006-2016), as proclaimed by resolution 62/9, be continued and stepped up.

The United Nations should be the catalyst in coordinating international cooperation with respect to Chernobyl. We therefore support the efforts of the UNDP Administrator to put the United Nations action plan on Chernobyl to 2016 into action. We welcome the active participation of all concerned United Nations agencies, the World Bank, the IAEA and other international organizations in its implementation. We would also like to commend the contribution made by tennis player Maria Sharopova, the UNDP Goodwill Ambassador for Chernobyl.

It is important to us to keep the emphasis in this work on the sustainable development of the territories affected by radiation. We therefore consider the adoption by consensus of resolution 65/131 on Chernobyl in December 2010 to be the confirmation of the international community's solidarity with the efforts of affected States and its readiness to continue to pay necessary attention to Chernobyl issues at the international level.

We welcome the results of the International Conference on Chernobyl held in Kyiv last week. We are convinced that these results will contribute to the development of an important area of international cooperation, such as strengthening readiness to respond to technological disasters, in particular those associated with radioactive accidents. In the context of new challenges and threats to our civilization, such cooperation is more relevant than ever before. The experience of the Russian Federation's Ministry for Emergency Situations and its readiness to explore international cooperation in this field are well known.

We highly appreciate the international assistance extended to the Government of Ukraine and call on all partners to continue their efforts to complete the construction of the shelter facility in order to transform the site into a stable and environmentally safe system.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine): Twenty-five years have passed since 26 April 1986, when the hearts of people were marked with pain and sorrow for the lost lives of their relatives and the future of millions of people was destroyed. The Chernobyl catastrophe has led to the pollution of more than 145,000 square kilometres of territory in Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian Federation. We remember and pay tribute to those who gave their lives to try to minimize and stop the spread of the atomic radiation emission caused by the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

Having experienced a nuclear disaster, the people of Ukraine understand the recent Japanese tragedy as no other nation can. Ukraine understands and shares the sorrow and expresses its sincere sympathy with the people of Japan for their losses during the recent natural disaster that led to the accident at the Fukishima power plant and the emission of radiation.

Chernobyl and the Japanese catastrophe have made us reconsider the destructive power of an uncontrolled atom. Intense discussions at both the national and international levels, as well as within the framework of the United Nations, have been resumed with the aim of working out a decision on the future of nuclear power plants and their safety for human activity, which reminds us once again of the urgency and timeliness of the nuclear safety issue.

We cannot ignore the benefits of nuclear energy as an environmentally clean, low-cost energy source, especially in the context of humankind's increased energy needs and the United Nations policy of sustainable development. However, the possession of nuclear technologies in the twenty-first century is not merely a prerogative; it is also a huge responsibility of the State before its own people, neighbouring countries and the whole world.

We are pleased to acknowledge productive discussions on the issue raised within the framework of the Kyiv Summit on the Safe and Innovative Use of Nuclear Energy and at the International Conference held in Kyiv last week under the theme was "Twenty-five Years After the Chernobyl Disaster: Safety for the Future". The declaration adopted there reaffirmed the importance of nuclear safety and demonstrated the willingness of States to continue to cooperate in this sphere. The first-ever visit to the Chernobyl nuclear power plant by a Secretary-General of the United Nations highlighted the importance of these issues.

We concede that overcoming the consequences of nuclear disasters is not an achievable task for one generation or one State, especially when it comes to the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster. A number of social and economic projects are being implemented in the Chernobyl-affected territories, and investments from the private and State sectors are being made, including from abroad.

In the light of the recent tragic events in Japan, our task is to reconsider the degree of measures taken to transform the Chernobyl power plant into an ecologically safe system and to evaluate the level of nuclear safety at all Ukrainian nuclear power plants. In this regard, I would like to emphasize the role of the international community, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in the transformation of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant into an ecologically safe system.

As the country that has to cover the main part of expenditures in nuclear disaster aftermath mitigation, Ukraine is grateful for the international solidarity and support that have been shown for its national efforts. We highly appreciate the States' contributions through the conference of donors to the Chernobyl Fund on the completion of Chernobyl-related projects, including the shelter project. We cannot fail to mention the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development and its significant role as the administrator the Chernobyl Shelter Fund and the Nuclear Safety Account. We welcome the creation of the international scientific centre on the exploration of technological risks related to the use of nuclear energy, under the auspices of the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The Chernobyl issue remains an important item on the United Nations agenda, in particular within the framework of the General Assembly. We welcome the fact that resolution 65/131 on the examination, mitigation and minimization of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster was adopted by consensus in December 2010. Seventy-four States Members of the United Nations sponsored the resolution.

The overall solution to the Chernobyl issue remains a priority for Ukraine. I believe that the implementation of the United Nations Decade of

Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions will meet expectations.

Twenty-five years after the disaster, we take note of our achievements and acknowledge the tasks that remain before us in the complete rehabilitation of the affected areas and in returning normal life to the population. Ukraine fully supports the activities of agencies led by the UNDP, in the light of the realization of the 10-year United Nations action plan for Chernobyl to 2016. We believe that the complete rehabilitation of normal life in the affected territories can be achieved only through the joint efforts of the international community.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silent prayer or meditation for the victims of the Chernobyl disaster.

The Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Niger, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Abani (Niger): On behalf of the Group of African States, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this solemn event as a special commemorative meeting of the General Assembly in observance of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe.

At the outset therefore, and as we remember this sorrowful event, I wish to convey to you, Madame, and through you to the people of the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus, the deep prayers of the African Group at the United Nations, and in particular those of the entire people of Africa.

Resolution 65/131 of 15 December 2010 requested a commemoration of the silver jubilee of the Chernobyl disaster of 26 April 1986. This event, as well as the recent earthquake and tsunami that led to the damage of nuclear reactors in Japan, have become compelling reminders that we cannot be too careful with the issue of nuclear safety. The need to develop a response to nuclear disasters of such proportions as Chernobyl cannot, therefore, be overstressed. These events have shown that, ultimately, no State is immune to either natural disasters or accidents that could leave its people traumatized and constitute a potential human, environmental and economic tragedy for its neighbours.

Twenty-five years ago, the world woke up to the realization that, despite our many achievements, advances and scientific innovations, humanity is not yet fully immune to human errors. We are still at risk from future disasters that could occur as a result of inadvertent human errors or natural disasters. After all, we are all a part of one global environment. In view of this, we are encouraged by resolutions 45/190, 46/150, 47/165, 48/206 and 50/134.

We note the huge economic cost of the disaster and welcome resolution 65/131 on the role of the United Nations in the strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, including community-based development projects and support for investment promotion in the affected areas. In the words of the Secretary-General, science has shown that normal life is fully possible for most people living in areas affected by the Chernobyl disaster. What is needed, therefore, is recovery and development based on fresh investment, employment opportunities and the restoration of a sense of community.

We wish to encourage the Governments of the affected countries not to relent in their efforts to implement national strategies to address new challenges by strengthening ongoing humanitarian programmes and to remain open to international cooperation. We welcome the initiative of the Government of Ukraine, supported by the Russian Federation and Belarus, to convene an international conference entitled "Twenty-five Years after the Chernobyl Disaster: Safety for the Future" last week in Kyiv.

The African Group also wishes to highlight the importance of the full implementation of the third decade after the Chernobyl disaster, 2006-2016, the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions, as proclaimed in resolution 62/9. We view this as a positive development, which is focused on achieving the goal of a return to normal life for the affected communities within the specified time frame. We call on the United Nations Coordinator of International Cooperation on Chernobyl to continue work towards the realization of the United Nations action plan on Chernobyl, in collaboration with the

Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

Finally, we wish to thank all international partners — including the United Nations Development Programme, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, the World Health Organization, the World Bank and the Chernobyl Forum — for their untiring efforts in this recovery process. We also hope that the existing solidarity among the affected people and States will be sustained by the need for continued cooperation to overcome the last vestiges of the tragedy.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Asian Group at this special commemoration on this day marking the 25th anniversary of a terrible catastrophe.

When Reactor No. 4 exploded 25 years ago today at the Chernobyl nuclear power station, the peaceful use of nuclear power took its first calamitous turn, and the world shook. No corner of our planet would subsequently not hear of the disaster or feel its effects in some way. And for the more than 160,000 people living close by, their lives were changed profoundly by the explosion and subsequent fire. Many were exposed to unsafe levels of radiation in the initial two days and were then forced suddenly to leave all they had, to live the rest of their lives anxiously with the knowledge of what health-related possibilities lay ahead of them.

And yet, within this tragedy, there existed inspiring acts of such supreme courage on the part of a large number of disaster relief workers and engineers — like those heroic plant workers at Fukushima — that no expression of gratitude by us could ever repay the debt the world owes them. These are people like Anatoly Tkachuk, who led a four-person team into the sarcophagus placed over Reactor No. 4 eight months after the accident to assess the condition of the reactor, and was the only one to have survived the experience.

In this connection, the Asian Group is pleased with the outcome of the high-level meeting held in Kyiv on 19 April, at which $785 million were pledged for the replacement of the sarcophagus, in the form of a new 20,000-tonne steel shield soon to be placed over the reactor.

For the Asian Group, today's event cannot be separated from the still fresh and continuing news reports reaching us from the Fukushima nuclear plant in Japan. Jointly, both nuclear disasters — the only two to have reached a 7 on the severity scale — stand as reminders of just how much damage poor management, in the case of Chernobyl, or an earthquake, in the case of Fukushima, can inflict on humankind and the environment.

That exacts a price so considerable that it will no doubt dent our belief that we are able to continue to harness physics in complete and assured safety, at least for the foreseeable future. And yet, both events will no doubt also serve to guide us to eventually improve engineering methods and designs, both of which will enable us to continue to deliver that much-needed energy source to humanity.

The Asian Group stands with the Government and the people of Ukraine on this solemn occasion, as well as with the Governments and the peoples of the other most directly affected countries, Belarus and the Russian Federation. Most particularly, however, we express our sympathies to and solidarity with the victims who have suffered the most: those who were in the closest proximity to the Chernobyl nuclear power plant exactly 25 years ago today. They are in our thoughts.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Lithuania, who will speak on behalf of the Eastern European States.

Mr. Čekuolis (Lithuania): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States on the occasion of the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, the world's worst nuclear accident.

Every year, we commemorate the tragic event in Chernobyl, the symbol of catastrophe for millions of people in Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian Federation. On 26 April 1986, Unit 4 of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant exploded, releasing a vast amount of nuclear radiation into the atmosphere. The disaster

unexpectedly reached global proportions. Millions of people in Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian Federation were exposed to the radiation and still suffer its consequences. The vast amount of radiation released into the atmosphere also affected many European States. Thousands of people in the worst-contaminated areas were traumatized, displaced from their homes and left to face acute economic difficulties and chronic health problems. Today, we pay tribute to the memory of all of the victims: those who lost their lives during the explosion, the brave ones who gave their lives in striving to contain the effects of the explosion in the immediate aftermath, and those who subsequently suffered from diseases caused by the pollution.

Allow me to also take this opportunity to commend the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, other specialized agencies and programmes, the European Union, individual countries and civil society organizations for their response and continued assistance in overcoming the consequences of the disaster.

After 25 years, the impact of the Chernobyl catastrophe in the affected areas is still present. Much remains to be done. Several million people still live in the affected areas on radiation-contaminated soil. The scope and complexity of the humanitarian, environmental, medical, psychological and economic consequences created a problem of common concern. In that respect, I would like to stress in particular the role of the United Nations Development Programme in strengthening international cooperation in mitigating and minimizing the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. It is of the utmost importance to ensure that the United Nations strategy for Chernobyl and the United Nations action plan aimed at implementing the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions (2006-2016) are implemented in an effective and timely manner.

The unfolding events at the Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear plant, caused by the earthquake and the tsunami that struck Japan on 11 March remind us of the importance of strengthening nuclear safety and of responding promptly to nuclear accidents and emergencies. These events demonstrate that nuclear safety is enhanced when the global community works together to meet those challenges. On behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, I would like to express our solidarity with the people of Japan and respect for their fortitude and endurance.

I would like to stress that many hard lessons have been learned from the Chernobyl disaster. More should be drawn from the recent tragic events in Japan. Those recent events have proved once again that, more than ever before, we must all must ensure that nuclear safety is the most important priority for every single country that decides to develop its civil nuclear programme. We must guarantee that the highest nuclear security and safety standards will be respected during the entire nuclear power plant cycle. We must ensure that cooperation and the exchange of best practices in the fields of planning, building and operating nuclear facilities contribute to the enhancement of nuclear safety. We must also strive to ensure worldwide adherence to the relevant international conventions.

The Chernobyl disaster, that devastating tragedy, should never be forgotten. We should do everything possible, collectively and individually, to prevent another nuclear disaster anywhere in the world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Barbados, who will speak on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Goddard (Barbados): It is my honour to address the Assembly on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC).

Exactly 25 years ago, the world witnessed the worst accident in the history of the nuclear power industry. The disaster at Chernobyl was a major catastrophe. It caused the release of large amounts of radioactive materials, which affected large areas of what are now the Russian Federation, Belarus and Ukraine. The environmental, humanitarian, health, social and economic impacts continue to be felt to this day.

Today, we pay tribute to the lives lost as a result of the tremendous catastrophe. Innocent victims included residents, emergency workers and plant workers, who paid the ultimate price. We also express our concern for and solidarity with the men and women who continue to suffer the consequences. Chernobyl affected the entire international community. The tragedy touched us to the core. It changed not only the communities involved, but also attitudes to nuclear power on a global scale.

We are encouraged by growing evidence that we have learned a number of lessons from the tragedy. In the aftermath of the incident, a number of issues have come under review, including international radiation standards, strategies for improving the nuclear engineering process, safety standards, and procedures and processes for managing nuclear waste. Nearly a quarter of a century later, efforts have already begun to reassess the situation in the affected areas with a view to developing new policies and strategies for recovery.

We welcome the findings of the Chernobyl Forum, which, while acknowledging that certain negative effects would persist for decades to come, have shown that an improvement in the present circumstances is a realistic prospect for people living in the affected regions.

The need for international cooperation continues, especially in the area of research and follow-up studies, in order to cope with the health consequences and the long-term environmental impact of the disaster. The GRULAC region has offered significant cooperation assistance to the affected countries and will continue to lend our strong support.

In the words of the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in his statement at the International Conference on Chernobyl: Twenty-Five Years On:

> "More than ever before, our watchword must now be 'safety first'. Safety first, when countries review their existing nuclear power plants, when they plan and build new facilities, and when engineers design innovative new reactors."

GRULAC expresses its support for the leading role that the IAEA has played and is continuing to play in providing guidance and standards for safety and security in the use of nuclear power. We hope that at the upcoming IAEA Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety, high-level Government officials will advance the progress already made in this area. We look to countries which are interested in expanding their present nuclear programmes, or which are considering introducing nuclear power, to implement the highest possible safety standards.

In concluding, I suggest that our best tribute to the victims of this tragedy is to ensure that the lessons learned from the accident will bring about lasting improvements in nuclear and radiation safety.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): Today it is my honour to take the floor on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Twenty-five years have gone by since the Chernobyl tragedy, and it remains particularly present in our memories, both individual and collective. The recent, tragic events in Fukushima have once again brought Chernobyl to the forefront of public consciousness. Today, our thoughts go first to those people who continue to suffer from the consequences of the catastrophe, in particular in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, but also in other parts of the world where many affected families sought refuge. We continue to be concerned by the health problems affecting the lives of so many children, women and men. We are also aware of the environmental, economic and social consequences of the catastrophe.

While a tragedy of such enormous proportions can never be erased from our memories, its effects must at last to some extent be compensated for. It is important to note that solidarity has been forthcoming from the entire international community on a truly historic scale. Many States took part in an unprecedented effort to mitigate environmental pollution and to assess the impact of the disaster on the health of people in order to treat them properly and to develop social and development programmes for nuclear safety.

The debates on the real impact of the disaster should prompt us to consolidate our efforts for the health of the people, for rehabilitation and for nuclear safety at the site. Ultimately, our objective is to allow for the sustainable development of the area around Chernobyl. In terms of nuclear safety, we attach special importance to respect by all for their international commitments. In this regard, it is important that work on the new shelter for Reactor No. 4 at the site be completed soon.

The word Chernobyl will, in the minds of entire generations, forever be linked to one of the greatest nuclear disasters our world has experienced. We must

reaffirm our determination to limit the effects of the disaster and to prevent similar such events in the future.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Mr. Barton (United States of America): On behalf of the United States Mission to the United Nations and the American people, I would like to join Ukraine and the international community in marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

We gather here this morning to honour the victims of Chernobyl — the countless men, women, and children who lost their lives to the tragic events that transpired a quarter-century ago today. We especially pay tribute to the heroic sacrifice of the emergency workers who responded on that fateful April morning when an explosion in Unit 4 of the nuclear power station at Chernobyl triggered the most serious nuclear accident the world has ever known. The continued existence of a 30-kilometre exclusion zone around Chernobyl serves as a constant reminder of those events.

The international community continues to help those affected by the disaster deal with its devastating health and environmental consequences. Last week, at the Chernobyl pledging conference in Kyiv, the international community committed further financial resources towards completing a new safe confinement shelter and a storage facility for spent fuel at Chernobyl.

Since the tragedy, Ukraine has become a global leader in nuclear safety and security. From its historic renunciation of nuclear weapons in 1994 to its decision to get rid of its stocks of highly enriched uranium by the 2012 nuclear security summit in South Korea, Ukraine has positioned itself at the very forefront of global nuclear safety and innovation. The United States commends these efforts and supports Ukraine's global leadership on nuclear energy.

As the international community marks this solemn anniversary, we are following the grave situation at Japan's Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear power plant. The events at Fukushima, Chernobyl and Three Mile Island remind us that nuclear safety is not strictly a national responsibility. This is why it is imperative that the international community continue to learn from these events and use that knowledge to ensure the safety and security of nuclear energy now and in the future.

We must take measures at all levels to ensure the safety and security of our nuclear industries. Investment in scientific research surrounding the safe disposal and storage of spent nuclear fuel is a priority. It is also our collective responsibility to build upon existing protocols to further international nuclear energy cooperation and emergency response. And finally, we must advance work towards a new generation of nuclear reactor designs with the most innovative safety features.

As we pause here today to reflect on the terrible events of 26 April 1986, the legacy of Chernobyl must strengthen our shared commitment to ensuring that nuclear safety remains at the forefront as we define the role nuclear power will play in our energy future.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to conclude its consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 69?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.